the weekly
Standard

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CONFEDERATE NATION
NOEMIE EMERY

THE REAL AL GORE

by Tucker Carlson

Why Tony Blair Isn't Like Clinton
IRWIN M. STELZER

Why Bloomsbury Still Fascinates
MALCOLM BRADBURY

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Anti-social Clymer

Does someone have it in for Adam Clymer? The congressional correspondent for the *New York Times*, known as one of the more sour members of the media, seems to have gotten on the wrong side of the Capitol Police. Following a May 1 press conference in the Capitol, Clymer was told by an officer not to traverse a particular area owing to the impending arrival of the Spanish prime minister. A spokesman for the Capitol Police told the *Hill* newspaper that "Mr. Clymer became belligerent and started using profanities. The officer's supervisor stepped in in an attempt to explain the situation, Mr. Clymer again used profanities and left the area."

The story was first reported in the *Washington Times*, and Clymer believes the paper was fed the information by the police. Revealing his contempt for both, he told the *Hill* that "a real police force would have talked to me before going to the *Washington Times,* of all places."

Clymer is perhaps best known for having received and publicized earlier this year a tape of a purloined cellular telephone discussion between Newt Gingrich and other Republican leaders concerning the ethics charges against Gingrich. Clymer wrote the story up, and it made a big splash, though not the kind of splash he might have hoped, since it was chiefly Democrats who got wet. The taping was of course illegal, and the Florida couple who made the tape recently pleaded guilty to an infraction of federal anti-wiretapping law; the FBI investigation continues, presumably focusing on the actions of House Democrats like Jim McDermott, who resigned from the ethics committee after Clymer's story seemed to finger him as the intermediary who made the illegal tape available to reporters.

Here's hoping that the Capitol Police have in fact decided to launch an anti-Clymer vendetta. The alternative explanation—a generalized crackdown on reporters using profanities—might seriously deplete the Capitol Hill press corps.

The Next Ralph Reed

Now that Ralph Reed has hung out his shingle as a political consultant, who will step into his shoes as executive director of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition—a position that Reed managed to make one of the most influential in Washington? Three candidates' names come up most often, all with Capitol Hill backgrounds: Randy Tate, a 31-year-old former congressman from Washington state who was defeated in November; Woody Jenkins, a longtime conservative activist who is presently contesting his loss to Mary Landrieu in last year's Louisiana Senate race; and Art Rhodes, chief of staff to Rep. Mike Parker of Mississippi.

One might think that Capitol Hill experience would impress the Republican leadership, which is playing a significant role in the choice of Reed's replacement. But that's not the case. The leadership fears Jenkins will have an ax to grind over the lukewarm support that's been given to his complaints of election fraud. And the leadership isn't thrilled about either Tate or Rhodes, as both lack national profiles. The most promising candidate is said to be Bob Rusbuldt, vice president for federal affairs at the Independent Insurance Agents of America, an organization with 300,000 members nationwide that has tended to support conservative Republican candidates. Rusbuldt, the son of a preacher, is not campaigning for the job, which may explain his strong position in the race. Will it hurt or help that he attends the same church as the Family Research Council's Gary Bauer?

A Few Good Republicans

Despite the era of good feeling ushered in by the budget deal, a few vigilant Republicans are holding the Clinton administration's feet to the fire. Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Jesse Helms learned recently that the United States Information Agency, a branch of the State Department, was planning to fund a visit to the United States by two members of Hong Kong's provisional legislature. The provisional legislature, which is not (yet) recognized by the U.S. government, is a creation of Beijing designed to supplant Hong Kong's democratically elected Legislative Council. Under pressure from Helms, USIA relented and agreed to pull funding for the group's trip. On the other side of the Capitol, Rep. Charles Canady of Florida recently made bold to ask that someone from the Justice Department testify before his subcommittee concerning the civil rights division's programs and budget request. The administration came up with only a single person qualified to give testimony, acting assistant attorney general Isabelle Pinzler, and then informed Canady in a May 6 letter that Pinzler wouldn't be available on the scheduled dates because "she will be attending a colloquium on equal opportunity and civil rights in Prague" where she

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Scrapbook

"will participate in panel discussions which will include members of the Czech Parliament and Senate and the Czech Helsinki Committees." Sounds riveting. Is it really more important than congressional oversight? And if so, is there really only one person in the entire Justice Department who can testify about the budget of the civil rights division?

Armey's Army

In a House Republican caucus not exactly brimming with leaders on the subject of foreign and defense policy, majority leader Dick Armey is beginning to step up to the plate. He was among the first to signal displeasure with the Clinton administration's policy of "constructive engagement" with China. And he has told opponents of that policy that he may oppose renewal of China's most-favored-nation status, in what promises to be the hot legislative battle of the summer. Meanwhile, he is co-sponsoring legislation that supports both an acceleration of NATO enlargement and efforts to build trust between the alliance and Russia. Armey says that NATO expansion should proceed "in a way which is sensitive to Russian interests." This squares with the view taken by Sen. Richard Lugar and other strong supporters of an American leadership role in Europe. But here's the real test of manhood: Defense spending is down 40 percent in real dollars over the last 12 years, and too many Republicans have happily gone along. Will Armey be the first member of the leadership to insist, against all political winds and despite the constraints of the budget deal, that Congress halt the decimation of the Pentagon?

Negative Reporting

The *New York Times* is well known for trying to be balanced in its news reporting, but sometimes its efforts verge on the ludicrous. Consider the following line from the May 5 front-page article on partial-birth abortion: "While a number of abortion-rights supporters have switched their votes to favor a ban on this particular procedure, there have been no reports of any anti-abortion lawmakers going the other way."

Not even one? Imagine that.

Ever in the vanguard of journalistic technique, the *Times* may be striking out in a new direction here—reporting what has not happened, as well as what has. This new "negative reporting" could feature items like, "There have been no reports that most Americans would like to stop driving in order to help the environment," or, "No experts currently believe that continental drift will cause North America to smash into Europe in the next five years." The advantages of the new negative reporting: It's more dramatic, it requires little if any research, and it's generally accurate.

Pundit, Heal Thyself

Every pundit is allowed to be wrong, but Bruce Anderson, the political editor of the London *Spectator* and John Major's most ardent fan, has used up his lifetime quota. Anderson wrote a prognosticating column the week before the British election that will go down in history. "I have been up country for the past few days, forming an impression of how the campaign is going," he told his readers in the April 26 issue. "There will be no uniform national swing," he predicted. "I could not detect any sign of a Labour landslide; there is no surge of enthusiasm for Mr. Blair or his party. . . . A Tory victory is still possible, though unlikely. But an overall Labour majority seems equally unlikely."

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O for a Bit of Certainty!

In his rather splenetic review of my book *Alias Shakespeare*, Paul Cantor ("Oxford Blues," April 28) charges that my views of literature are "Romantic," "multiculturalist," and even "Marxist." I was braced for hostile reviews, but I didn't expect to become a victim of McCarthyism.

Cantor says the book "adds little if anything" to the Shakespeare authorship debate. Yet he never even mentions my chief thesis: that the Earl of Oxford was bisexual and used the alias "William Shakespeare" to disguise his love for the young Earl of Southampton. An amazing story, which until now even Oxford's partisans have missed.

Right or wrong, this is anything but a mere "summary of arguments others have developed (but which, alas, Shakespeare scholars have long since refuted.)" Since it has never been said before, as Cantor appears not to realize, it can hardly have been refuted! That was *his* job. But he seems unfamiliar with what has been said or who has said it, as witness his confusion of the Earl of Burford, one of Oxford's leading advocates, with "the current Earl of Oxford."

Cantor, moreover, doesn't even know the orthodox scholarship very well. He says I read the sonnets as the poet's self-revelation because I "naively" assume that "poets simply translate their personal experience into poetry." Of course I make no such assumption, as my book amply shows; the issue is, and always has been, whether *these* poems record *this* poet's experience. Can Cantor possibly be unaware, even after reading my extensive treatment of the debate, that the long dispute over the Sonnets rages precisely around the question whether they are, as A.C. Bradley, E.K. Chambers, G.L. Kittredge, John Dover Wilson, C.S. Lewis, Kenneth Muir, A.L. Rowse. G.P.V. Akrigg, Robert Giroux, and many others have held, autobiographical? This question—with the dilemma it poses for the traditional view—is also at the heart of the authorship controversy.

Alias Shakespeare shows that the Sonnets yield a detailed portrait of their author: an aging nobleman, in love with a younger one; a "lame" man; a man well versed in the law; a public figure who has suffered "disgrace" and "vulgar scandal," and who hopes that his own "name will be buried," lest it "shame" both his lover and himself, though he expects his poetry to be "immortal" when he himself is "forgotten."

All this points to Oxford; it can't possibly describe Stratford's son. But Cantor refuses to deal with this and much more evidence of Oxford's authorship, and his only positive evidence for the Stratsfordian amounts to the very testimony that is in doubt.

The Shakespeare authorship question offers fascination and even fun to anyone who can approach it with an open mind; but Cantor seems not to enjoy it much. As an academic scholar whose credentials as an expert are at stake, perhaps he has his own "axes to grind." But I'm afraid my Marxism is showing!

JOSEPH SOBRAN
BURKE, VA

PAUL CANTOR RESPONDS: ***I came to doubt the originality of Joseph Sobran's book from a few facts. First, its central thesis, that Edward de Vere wrote the works of Shakespeare, is old hat. Second, he lifts the title for one of his chapters, "Reinventing Shakespeare," from the trendy book of the same name by Gary Taylor. Third, for his evidence of Shakespeare's knowledge of Italy, he simply quotes two whole pages from Ernesto Grillo's*** **Shakespeare and Italy.** ***When a book is clearly this derivative, one begins to wonder if anything in it is original. If it will make Sobran feel better, however, I stand corrected: Some of the silliness in his book is original.***

Sobran's discussion of the sonnets is as good an example of his selective use of evidence as anything I chose to analyze in my review. For example, early on he casually announces: "The twenty-six sonnets about the dark mistress record a series of situations, but not exactly a story we can follow, and I set them aside." Evidently, if something in the sonnets points in the direction of Oxford, it constitutes a "story" for Sobran; if it does not, it is reduced to a mere "series of situations" we can safely ignore. If Sobran knows as much as he claims about discussions of the sonnets, then he is aware that the story of the dark lady and the question of her identity have preoccupied students of the sonnets as much as any issue he raises. No theory that claims to account for the sonnets as autobiographical can be adequate if it fails to explain the role of the infamous dark lady.

As for Sobran's theory of the sonnets, I still do not quite understand it. He seems to claim that Oxford wished to immortalize Southampton in verse, but not to associate his beloved young earl with his own disgraced name. Thus he somehow contrived to have the sonnets circulate under somebody else's name (Shakespeare's). Sobran expects us to believe that a disguise, which he is able to penetrate today, would have deceived the contemporaries of Oxford and Southampton. Neither Southampton nor Oxford is named in the sonnets; according to Sobran, Elizabethan readers were supposed to pick up from hints that they were written about Southampton, but not that they were written by Oxford.

I evidently do owe an apology to the current Earl of Oxford. I must have misheard Burford's name when I was introduced to him or misremembered it. I've always had trouble telling English aristocrats apart. My basic point remains the same: Listening to Burford or Oxford or whoever showed me how English upper-class snobbery fuels the questioning of Shakespeare's authorship. That occasion fixed in my mind the distinction, which I referred to in my review, between a conventional aristocrat (like the modern earl) and a natural aristocrat (like Shakespeare).

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Correspondence

Sobran wonders how the commoner Shakespeare could have presented himself in his sonnets as equal or even superior to a noble lord. If, as I believe, Shakespeare was indeed the author of his plays, he had every right to feel superior to the typical aristocrat of his day or any other. In that sense, I did have an axe to grind in my review; I was trying to point out the difference between a false aristocracy of social status and a true aristocracy of the spirit.

Paul Cantor scathingly dissects Joseph Sobran's conviction that the Earl of Oxford wrote the plays bearing William Shakespeare's name. I would like to add a few words.

Sobran is a good writer, but he makes a sorry case for his clearly cherished conviction that the works of William Shakespeare were not written by the provincial glover's son whose name they bear. Sobran joins an earnest band who, citing how little is known of Shakespeare's education, experience of the world, and private life, believe not only that Shakespeare didn't write the works, but that he *couldn't* have written them.

A few years ago, Claremont College completed a three-year computer-driven battery of tests to determine whether any of the 27 most mentioned candidates for the mantle of the Bard of Avon actually matched Shakespeare's stylistic peculiarities. None does. Modal analyses of the work of each, using pattern-recognition techniques borrowed from radar to measure the incidence of hyphenated compound words, relative clauses, open lines, and feminine endings, disqualified everyone tested.

Sobran disdains such an approach, pointing out instead what a dashing, well-traveled, and altogether admirable fellow Oxford was. The queen and Oxford's family would have been "scandalized," Sobran says, to know he'd written works of genius. Why? Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, published at least one book and wrote music and songs for court masques; her successor, James I, sponsored the first production of *Macbeth* mounted indoors, at court.

Sobran deals with the plays themselves only glancingly, avoiding the fact that many, including four of the five tragedies and the sonnets, are dated after Oxford's death. Are we to conclude that this prominent nobleman wrote 36 plays and a wealth of poetry in the last dozen years of his life, arranged to have them produced and published anonymously and, largely, posthumously, and did not preserve one page of this glorious work, nor leave behind one note to claim his authorship for posterity? Why?

And, how? Did he smuggle them into the theater in disguise, or was Shakespeare a willing ghost—which gets us back to, "Why?" The record of Shakespeare's life is meager because he was a commoner. Lacking a title, men lived and died in obscurity, unless they got in trouble, like Marlowe. Shakespeare was exactly the parvenu player from the country Sobran describes, scribbling away on the South Bank and turning out the 16th-century equivalent of Movies of the Week. It took the richness of the middle plays for London to realize his true size. The world began to catch on only after his death, when Heminge and Condell published the Folio, prefaced by praise from his fellows. (They did not ignore him, as Sobran states.)

Being a writer, Sobran misreads Shakespeare as academics do: He treats him as a writer. I know, there he is on the page, but that's not where he or his plays live. Shakespeare leaps alive in air, in the spoken sound of his words. Only actors really understand this, though audiences sense it subliminally, in performance. When you're redacting the plays in rehearsal, you make the changes in terms of the sound as much as the meaning. Also the pauses.

That's what Shakespeare did as actor/manager. His plays loom so massively over all the other writing in the world because of his sublime gift, but it was a poet-player's gift. He created those men and women to live on a stage, seen in light and sudden dark, heard in cries and whispers. Exploring them there reveals more than a lifetime in a library can.

I began working on the plays when I was in high school, and I guess I've played his people more than any other current American actor. I know how they defeat you, leave you bleeding on your knees in the sand, aching to try again.

When I was adapting *Antony and Cleopatra* for a film, fearing the outrage of scholars over some radical redactions I'd made, I asked Laurence Olivier's advice. "Do what you think he would've done, laddy," he said. "They none of them f—g know."

CHARLTON HESTON
BEVERLY HILLS, CA

In his review of Joseph Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare*, Paul Cantor spends a great deal of effort refuting a straw man. Sobran is not claiming that a commoner could not have written works of genius, but that this particular commoner (William Shakspere of Stratford) could not have written these particular works of genius. Sobran supports his thesis with detailed analysis that Cantor chooses to ignore.

The dates don't work. The subjects don't work. The tone, contents, and target of the sonnets don't work. The historical references to the performers of the plays don't work. To anyone with an open mind, it is quite clear that Mr. Shakspere did not write the works of Shakespeare.

If he didn't, who did? It could have been another commoner, a noble, or another actor at the Globe. Sobran makes a strong argument for the Earl of Oxford, one that I find convincing. The more important question is: Why is this position so controversial?

Cantor is following a century-old tradition of political correctness, in which anyone who questions the authorship of the plays is branded an elitist snob, a Marxist, or worse. It is instructive to watch the inhabitants of academe link arms to repel revolutionary new ideas. Orthodoxy at the expense of the data may be an admirable way to run a religious cult, but it is certainly not what we expect of scholarship.

STEPHEN FLEMING
ATLANTA, GA

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Casual

Back to Harvard

It's been a long, long time since I was last in Cambridge, Massachusetts. How long? Well, let's put it this way: As I drove along Mt. Auburn Street, I passed the battered old sign of the University Typewriter Repair Shop and realized that the first time I had seen it, I was actually taking a typewriter in to be repaired.

The shop's windows are now filled with broken-down personal computers. Cambridge has kept up with changes in technology. But not much else. Cambridge is a sort of academic Brigadoon, the Scottish village frozen forever in the habits and ways of an ancient past. The people here remain devoted to a quaint liberalism that has quite vanished almost everywhere else. It's an especially nice touch that the phone number of the fax line at the Kennedy School is (617) 495 1972.

I graduated from law school here in June 1987, and in the ten years since, I've spent precisely one day in Cambridge. That was in June 1988, when my wife and I were routed through Boston on our way to a Maine honeymoon and used the layover for a quick tour of the Harvard campus. As we walked about, we spotted a classmate of mine. I asked him what he was doing in the old place. He said that he was working in the Boston office of Gov. Dukakis's presidential campaign. But only for a few months more. After that, he confidently informed us, he was White House bound.

As he pedaled off on his bicycle, my wife asked me incredulously whether my friend really believed that America would elect a short liberal from Brookline its president. Yes, I had to say, yes he really does believe it. They all do.

It's only by happenstance that I'm here on the tenth anniversary of my escape from Cambridge. I'm missing my actual reunion by just a few weeks: Yellow-and-white striped tents are already being raised all over Harvard. The last time saw them, Harvard was disgorging 550 more eager young lawyers, me included, on an already overburdened world.

I've lost track of almost all of them. They were, for the most part, just what you'd expect them to be: highly intelligent, conscientious people, already showing the early signs of the bitter dissatisfaction with life that afflicts so many of those who earn their living in the law. Unlike their often crazy professors, they gravitated naturally toward the political middle, their instinctive moderation curbed only by their timidity in the face of the commissars of political correctness who dominated Harvard then as now.

The great 19th-century English jurist A.V. Dicey observed that the opinions of the bar are always those of the previous generation, and those of the bench belong to the generation before that. Thus, the man who taught us antitrust law in the mid-1980s tried to imbue us with fears of predatory pricing and attempted monopolization—almost twenty years after these terrors had been definitively shown to be as real as dragons and two-headed men.

Curiously, the most radical of the faculty were the most severely out-of-date. Until I got to law school, I had never been taught Marx as anything other than a historical text. But one of my funkier law school professors offered us Marx's notorious "On the Jewish Question" as a penetrating analysis of the evils of capitalism. (The sections in which Marx argued that Judaism was nothing but an excuse for exploitive money-grubbing and that socialist revolution was the only way to rid Europe of Jews for good were tactfully excised in the photocopying process.)

At the time, I could not understand why the university put up with such charlatans. I can't understand it even now. But now that I'm no longer paying tuition—and can chuck alumni fund-raising letters in the garbage—I can at least resign myself to it. I stopped by Austin Hall to look through the windows of the classroom doors. The students looked just as they did a decade ago, although the spiral notebooks we used have vanished; almost everyone was tapping away on a laptop. And there in front of the class was a teacher I recognized. In his blue jeans, Eddie Bauer shirt, and hiking boots, he was hanging on to the appurtenances of youth as desperately as ever. But not even the most adamantly anti-ageist student could fail to notice that he had irrevocably passed his 50th birthday.

The bold, radical young faculty of my day are growing old. Professors pass through a university only a little less quickly than their students, and only the most brilliant of them are remembered after they go. My happiest hours in Cambridge were spent sculling up and down the Charles River. As I pulled toward the boathouse, I'd glide past the gold-tipped brick spires of the undergraduate residences. Through the endless Cambridge drizzle, they looked like something eternal, something entirely out of time. They have outlasted hundreds of foolish professors in the past. They can outlast hundreds more.

David Frum

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Racial Preferences Forever?

In October 1983, the J.A. Croson Company, a plumbing and heating contractor, made a winning bid with the city of Richmond, Virginia, on a project involving the installation of stainless-steel urinals in the municipal jail. A month later, city officials declared the company "unresponsive" and reopened the bidding because Croson had been unable to find a minority-owned subcontractor qualified to supply the toilets, as required by Richmond's hard-and-fast 30 percent construction procurement "set-aside." Croson then sued Richmond. In 1989, the Supreme Court ruled the city's set-aside unconstitutional. No state or local government, the court decided, may consider race, ethnicity, or gender in public contracting unless it demonstrates that the present effects of past discrimination against certain groups—all clearly identified—make remedial preferences for those groups appropriate.

Writing for the court in *Croson*, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor concluded that Richmond hadn't satisfied this test; its set-aside was a broad-brush racial spoils system the city had never justified with reference to any set of facts. But one sentence of the *Croson* opinion gave a glimmer of hope to the hundreds of other states and cities around the country with analogous affirmative-action contracting programs. "Where there is a significant statistical disparity between the number of qualified minority contractors willing and able to perform a particular service and the number of such contractors actually engaged by the locality or the locality's prime contractors," O'Connor suggested, "an inference of discriminatory exclusion could arise."

Those 45 words have made a handful of American consulting firms very rich. In *Croson*'s aftermath, rather than dismantle their presumptively unconstitutional procurement-preference regimes, dozens of state and local jurisdictions have commissioned outfits like National Economic Research Associates to construct a post-hoc rationale for the preservation of preferences. For several hundred thousand dollars a pop, NERA and its four major competitors in this new niche market will conduct a "disparity study" comparing the percentage of minority-owned businesses in a given area to the percentage of public contracting dollars those businesses win. There is almost always a gap. And from the gap, a salvaging "inference of discriminatory exclusion" is always magically derived. More than 130 such disparity studies have been performed since 1989, at a combined cost of roughly $50 million. Which makes the whole thing one of the largest social- science efforts in history.

> TRUTH IS NOT THE POINT OF DISPARITY STUDIES. THE POINT IS TO PRESERVE RACIAL PREFERENCES IN CONTRACTING, DESPITE JUDICIAL DISAPPROVAL.

And what a lot of crap it is. George La Noue and John Sullivan at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, offer a withering analysis of methodological bias in "disparity" research. Their work reveals that disparity studies typically circumscribe the geographic area in which calculations of minority-business density are made, and then arbitrarily compare the result to procurement expenditures that may be national in scope. Most such studies also make little if any attempt to limit their inquiry to businesses that are *capable* of performing a government contract. High-dollar public- works contracts tend naturally to go to large companies. Minority-owned companies, for many reasons that have nothing to do with recent discrimination, tend not to be large. Nationwide, about 85 percent of them have no paid employees, and some of the rest (like hairdressing salons) do not sell a product any government would ever buy.

But the truth of who buys what from whom and why is not the point of a disparity study. The point is to manipulate a lot of complicated data to produce an apparent deficit in minority contracting. To which disparity researchers add anecdotal evidence from minor-

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ity business owners who complain—as who would not?—that it's "unfair" their revenues aren't bigger. Eureka! Proof, say the jurisdictions that purchase these results, that persistent discrimination is sufficient to warrant continued, scattershot group preferences in contracting.

Interestingly enough, no disparity study has yet identified a single, verified example of contracting discrimination: denial of a public contract to a qualified, low-bidding minority firm. And, unsurprisingly, no disparity study has yet survived a trial-level constitutional challenge in federal court; in every post-*Croson* case, the relevant affirmative-action program has been struck down. But with the notable exception of California, whose voters last year passed a state constitutional amendment banning reverse discrimination, most jurisdictions across the country still refuse to heed the Supreme Court's intention. They are giving up their contracting preferences one by one, and only when legally ordered to do so.

President Clinton is doing this, too, with a $200 billion annual procurement budget heavily barnacled with much the same kind of group preferences that sank Richmond's toilet scheme. In a 1995 case, *Adarand* v. *Peña*, the Supreme Court explicitly applied its *Croson* principles to all contracting by the federal government. Two years later, last week, the Clinton administration finally announced that it will obey the Constitution. No longer, it claims, will race be a dispositive factor in certain federal procurement decisions. In 1996, for instance, of 6,000-odd businesses eligible for the Small Business Administration's infamous 8(a) set-aside program, only a couple dozen—0.5 percent—were white-owned. The Justice Department now loudly proclaims that white people will be admitted to 8(a).

Only in the fine print do we discover that these new white 8(a) participants will first have to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that they suffer "chronic racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias." And only in the fine print does it become plain that what Justice calls further new "limitations" on contracting preferences are in fact an elaborate attempt to maintain those preferences basically as they are. The Clinton Commerce Department, it turns out, has for some time now been conducting the grandest disparity-study experiment of them all: a national inquiry into minority business ownership in 80 separate industrial categories.

This monster project will prove no less stupid or more constitutionally defensible than any of its local predecessors. The business classifications involved are impossibly broad: Vaguely related products and services will be lumped together in billion-dollar stews, and only the very smallest companies will be excluded from the final tabulations. The racial and ethnic classification involved is also impossibly broad: Minority businesses will be considered as a whole, and no attempt will be made to disaggregate contracting for black businesses, Hispanic businesses, or anyone else. And the industry-wide procurement "disparities" the Commerce Department eventually identifies will all be imputed to discrimination. Which in each case will trigger a minority "bidding preference" of up to 10 percent on any procurement job—enough to make most such jobs unprofitable for non-minority contractors.

PRESIDENT CLINTON *SAYS* HE WANTS TO BANISH REVERSE DISCRIMINATION. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO ACTUALLY *DOING* IT, HE IS ALWAYS INDISPOSED.

In principle and essential practice, nothing will change. This is the Clinton style, of course. The president concedes conservative philosophy at the level of sound-bite rhetoric. He wants to "mend" affirmative action and banish reverse discrimination, he says. But when it comes to actually *doing* it, Mr. Clinton is always indisposed. Indeed, when it comes to doing it, he does the opposite—preserving or even extending liberal programs, professing all the while that of course he's leading us into a new, post-big-government era.

All of which once again raises an embarrassing question. Where is the Republican party, proud defender of individual rights and colorblind constitutionalism, sworn enemy of race preferences? Time after time, Republicans have demonstrated that they are helpless before Bill Clinton's verbal pyrotechnics. He has merely to *pretend* that he agrees with them, and they fall over dead. Reform of affirmative action? Heavens no, says Speaker Gingrich. Not yet.

When, then? More than Republican vanity and poll numbers are at issue here. Innumerable federal contracting preferences are authorized by statute. Those laws are unconstitutional; Congress is duty-bound to revise or revoke them. House Constitution subcommittee chairman Charles Canady of Florida has sponsored a bill that would perform that mission by eliminating racial preferences in government programs. Orrin Hatch of Utah will sponsor a similar bill in the Senate. Even a limited version of this legislation cannot pass without endorsement by the Republican party's elected leadership. How 'bout it, Newt? Trent? Anyone?

—David Tell, for the Editors

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How the Deal Was Done

by Fred Barnes

Without Erskine Bowles and John Hilley, there wouldn't have been a budget deal between the White House and congressional Republicans. So says Senate majority leader Trent Lott, who likes both men. Bowles, the White House chief of staff, and Hilley, the congressional lobbyist, replaced Leon Panetta this year as President Clinton's chief negotiators on the budget. "The difference was they wanted a budget deal and Panetta didn't," Lott insists. Panetta, Clinton's chief of staff from 1994 to early 1997, relished more government spending, not a balanced budget, according to Lott. Treasury secretary Robert Rubin, supposedly the most influential figure in Clinton's cabinet, was not helpful either. "I don't think much of his approach or attitude," says Lott. "I don't enjoy my conversations with him at all." Here's what Lott, in a moment of false modesty, doesn't say: Without his own maneuvering, there probably wouldn't have been a budget agreement.

Kent Lemon

Trent Lott

Clinton, never bold and always distrustful of Republicans, needed assurance it was safe to deal with GOP leaders. Lott sought to provide that. He promised Clinton that, absent big problems, his appointments would be confirmed quickly, and they were. Lott was the first person the president called after deciding in January to nominate Alexis Herman as labor secretary. And Lott personally ushered her troubled nomination through the Senate. Lott also saw the chemical weapons treaty, in part anyway, as a vehicle for demonstrating bipartisan cooperation. Without Lott's support, it wouldn't have been ratified.

Lott's most strenuous effort came on behalf of shaving a percentage point off the Consumer Price Index. This would make a budget deal easier, and Clinton desperately wanted it. Agreement on paring the CPI would be a "confidence-building measure" for Clinton leading to a deal, a senior White House aide said. The president twice told Lott: "We'll have to hold hands [on the CPI] and jump off the cliff together." Lott said he would. Seizing an idea proposed by Sen. Phil Gramm, Lott proposed to name six American economists who've won the Nobel prize to a panel that would decide the CPI issue. Clinton liked the idea, but nothing came of it. Instead, House Democratic leader Richard Gephardt went to the White House and "slapped them around a little bit" on the CPI, Lott says, and Clinton backed off.

Frustrated with the lack of progress on a deal, Lott arranged to meet secretly with Clinton on the residence floor of the White House on April 18. Senior Clinton aides weren't told of the one-on-one session. Lott kept it off his official schedule. He was smuggled into the White House at 9 a.m. and stayed an hour. "I felt like I was a hostage," says Lott. "The only thing I didn't have was a blindfold." Lott chastised Clinton for not pressing his negotiators to reach a budget deal. Lott said he'd kept his word and treated the chemical weapons issue fairly, drawing sharp criticism from conservatives. "Do you have the courage to do the same thing," Lott asked the president, knowing "you'll get hammered by your left flank?"

Clinton didn't, and the negotiations went nowhere. So 10 days later, Lott tried another tack, a private, four-page letter. He had a double purpose. He prodded Clinton, but if no deal were achieved, he wanted "a written record of what I'd done and recommended." The letter made an impression on Clinton. When he announced the budget deal on May 2, he said Lott had told him in a phone call it would be easier to agree while the economy was strong. Actually, Lott had written that in the letter. He also wrote that he and Clinton had "demonstrated our ability to cooperate on a major national security issue," the chemical-weapons treaty. "To continue the cooperative effort," Lott said, Clinton would have to "take bold steps," particularly shaving back the CPI on his own, without legislation, and reducing his demands for more domestic spending. "Do you think our nation is better off with an agreement, or without one?"

Lott said Clinton's spending plans were exorbitant. "You said in 1996 that the era of big government was over, and yet your negotiators insist on $5 billion new *mandatory* spending for school construction grants,"

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Lott wrote. "The trustees just told us again that Medicare Part A will be bankrupt in four years, yet your negotiators still propose to increase Medicare spending with $12 billion of new benefit spending." Meanwhile, Republicans had made deep concessions, seeking $100 billion in net tax cuts instead of the $245 billion they sought in 1995 (they settled for $85 billion). Bowles, Lott wrote, had promised "movement from the administration every single day." But this "has not occurred."

The president, Lott said, faced an alternative worse than a deal with Republicans. A GOP-only budget would skimp on entitlement cuts. "If the specter of political attacks from the left prevents us from making needed changes in Medicare and Medicaid, we will be faced with the unpleasant choice between significant squeezing of non-defense discretionary spending, or abandoning our goal of balancing the budget and cutting taxes." In this environment, Clinton's "investments" would not be approved and new programs he'd earlier initiated would be slashed. "Mr. President," Lott concluded, "I am trying my hardest to work with you. I hope you agree with me and will do the same."

The day after the letter was dispatched, John Hilley called Lott's office. "You're not going to release the letter to the press, are you?" he asked worriedly. He was told no (THE WEEKLY STANDARD obtained a copy after the budget deal was struck). Whether prompted by the letter or not, progress followed. Two days later, the terms were set except for tinkering. Lott talked to Clinton by phone four times on May 2 to iron out final details. When he called at 7:55 a.m., Lott was told Clinton wasn't up yet. Ten minutes later, the president called back. He wanted assurance the earned-income tax credit wouldn't be trimmed. Lott said fine, since Republicans had no plans to cut it anyway. Later, House speaker Newt Gingrich joined a call to the White House. Given a new revenue estimate, the three agreed to drop any legislated cut in the CPI. The last call, at 3:17 p.m., cinched the deal.

What did Lott get out of all this, besides the budget agreement? Flexibility, he says, but not much more. Now, Republicans have the luxury of saying no to anything Clinton proposes. They've proven they're not obstructionists. They've shown they're willing to be bipartisan. He personally has created a comfort zone for Clinton in dealing with Republicans. "I've been forthcoming and I've kept my word," Lott says. "I suppose that created some comfort. I've shown I could move legislation. I've shown I'll step up and take a tough vote." At the White House, "they have to acknowledge that means something. But maybe I'm reading too much into it."

Executive editor Fred Barnes appears weekly on* Fox on Politics *on the Fox News Channel.

ALL ABOARD THE BUDGET BOAT

by Matthew Rees

FOR A BUDGET DEAL that's far from perfect, the one announced on May 2 has shown remarkable power to unite Senate Republicans—all but Phil Gramm of Texas. He claims the spending cuts aren't real and the entitlement reform is bound to fail. "I don't ever recall a budget agreement that is more built on simply assuming the problem away," he says. "Both parties wanted to claim a balanced budget. They got together and claimed it, but they didn't *do* anything."

Gramm's dissent has irritated colleagues. House speaker Newt Gingrich said Gramm is "just factually not accurate" in claiming there's insufficient money to pay for the tax cuts. House majority leader Dick Armey said if Gramm had been around for the Creation, God wouldn't have been able to rest from His work on the seventh day: He would have had to "spend the whole day explaining it and justifying it to Sen. Gramm."

Among House Republicans, only one opponent of the budget deal has emerged: Bud Shuster, the pork-barreling chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, who is furious over cuts in transportation funding. Most House Republicans are preparing reluctantly to support an accord they think cuts spending too little. They will find it useful to have Shuster screaming alongside Democratic liberals like Paul Wellstone and Ted Kennedy about the need to loosen the purse strings.

And it's not only Republicans who are on board: At least for the moment, the budget deal has the support of most members of Congress. A few House members, like Republican Jim Nussle and Democrat Barney Frank, criticize it privately, but amazingly few are publicly against it. "There is genuine enthusiasm over the fact that there is a settlement," says Sen. Slade Gorton, an ally of Senate Republican leader Trent Lott. Minority leader Tom Daschle predicts that "well over three-fourths" of the Democratic caucus will sup-

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port the agreement. Even Gramm concedes, "I don't believe anything I say or do will beat this political deal." So few members have emerged as opponents that political talk shows have had to recruit outside activists like Jim Miller, the Reagan-administration budget director, to trash the accord.

So why the lack of opposition to an agreement no one loves? Because, says Gramm, "it is near perfection in terms of a political document." Indeed, there's just enough in the proposed budget to mollify all sides. Republicans get tax cuts and entitlement savings, while Democrats get funding for uninsured children and the biggest increase in education spending since the Johnson administration. Thus Gingrich claims the agreement is "the completion of the Contract With America," while John Hilley, White House liaison to Capitol Hill, calls it "a repudiation of the Contract."

All things considered, the deal offers Republicans more than Democrats, but there's a deeper reason why Republicans have signed on. Practically since Election Day, the GOP's budget objective has been to avoid a repeat of 1995, when high-stakes brinkmanship produced two government shutdowns and Republican retreat. Says Gorton, "We don't want to permit the president to have the kind of government-close-down leverage he used against us two years ago." Back then, Republican proponents of a shutdown came across as "stark raving lunatics," in the words of a top House GOP aide. Gramm says the experience "traumatized" them. This year, Lott in particular sought an early deal with the administration. The GOP assumption was that the more fights there were over the budget, and the longer negotiations dragged on, the worse the deal would be. In short, the Republicans were negotiating from a position of weakness. In light of that, even the flawed outcome can be counted a success.

To understand the GOP's queasiness, consider the case of Rep. Todd Tiahrt of Kansas. In the last session of Congress, he was a diehard Republican freshman. During the 1995 budget negotiations, he held out when most Republicans blinked. He now says of the budget deal, "I don't think it's a touchdown, but it is a first down," adding, "We've had too many of our touchdown passes intercepted." Asked whether he would have supported this budget outline two years ago, he answers, "No," but says this is the best Republicans could get with Bill Clinton in the White House.

He's probably right. The remaining question is which party benefits if harmony continues and the president signs a balanced budget into law. Rich Galen of the House Republican campaign committee thinks the GOP will gain. He says, "Friday, May 2 [the day the budget accord was announced] is the date you can mark as the end of the campaign for Congress. Republicans will keep their majority and grow it." Democrats too seem to think that a balanced budget will yield them political dividends. "We can truly claim the mantle of fiscal responsibility," says Daschle.

The one sure thing is that the balanced-budget

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package benefits incumbents. In the near term, that helps Republicans more than Democrats. But with Democrats signed on to a balanced budget, Republicans lose a potent campaign issue. Galen concedes that when challenging Democrats, GOP candidates "will have to find something to run against" besides the tax-and-spend label. Ultimately this could hurt Republicans: At a time when foreign policy ranks low among voters' concerns and Democratic spending doesn't threaten to spiral out of control, the GOP could find itself on the domestic-policy defensive.

But the immediate concern is completing the next steps in the budget process: passing a budget resolution, which sets spending caps for the 13 Appropriations subcommittees, then determining in those subcommittees how the money will be spent. Good feeling prevails for now, but there's no guarantee the process will go smoothly: The May 2 agreement—a mere nonbinding understanding between Congress and the administration—could still unravel. Late last week conservative Republican Joe Scarborough of Florida complained about the pressure members were under to support the package, with so many elements of it still up in the air: "Silly us, we still want to see the details."

Burned before, many in the GOP still worry the administration will play fast and loose. White House representative Hilley assured reporters last week that "nobody wants to shut the government down." That's certainly true of congressional Republicans, who have introduced a measure to guarantee the government won't close even if the budget process isn't completed by the October 1 deadline. But the administration and congressional Democrats oppose the measure, indicating they may still have some tricks to play. Republicans profess not to be worried. If the past is any guide, they should be.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

CLINTON'S PRIVATE POLLSTERS

by Karen Ball

MARK PENN AND DOUG SCHOEN, the president's pollsters, spend Wednesday evenings at the White House residence feeding the numbers-obsessed Bill Clinton data on how his strategies are going over with the public. But unlike previous consultants to the Clinton White House, Penn and Schoen, along with ad men Bob Squier and Bill Knapp, have never filed financial-disclosure reports, so their extensive portfolio of corporate and foreign political clients remains shielded from public view.

Why the exception? One possible explanation is potential election-year embarrassment to the White House. Even as he was conferring with the president, Schoen, it turns out, was doing jury-selection polling on behalf of the defense in the Whitewater trial of Jim Guy Tucker, Clinton's successor as governor of Arkansas. Tucker was ultimately convicted on two counts of fraud. The polling was apparently done with the president's blessing.

A former White House aide recalls Schoen's boasting that his polling had indicated co-defendant Jim McDougal should not take the stand because "he had zero credibility." The former aide remembers "thinking it was strange, because we were trying to say this trial has nothing to do with us."

The polling team's corporate and international clients, too, might have raised questions for a White House already beset by ethics troubles. Penn and Schoen represented AT&T, which had a gigantic interest in legislation overhauling telecommunications regulation. Vice President Al Gore, the administration's point man on the telecom bill, attended the weekly meetings that included Penn and Schoen. Associates of Penn, Schoen, Squier, and Knapp say they've also worked for political candidates in Turkey, Israel, Bermuda, and Venezuela. It's difficult to ferret out all their clients, but clearly business is booming in the wake of Clinton's victory. The pollsters' new clients include America Online.

Deepening the mystery of these consultants' nondisclosure is the White House's flip-flop on whether disclosure would be required. Early in Clinton's first term, his original team—James Carville, Paul Begala, Stan Greenberg, and Mandy Grunwald—caused an uproar when it was reported that they had free run of the White House. This led to the requirement that they disclose their clients, on the theory that people with so much access to the president and his aides might be in a position to do favors for their employers. Ultimately, these four voluntarily stopped accepting corporate clients and surrendered the "hard passes" that permitted them to come and go from the White House at will.

When the president began assembling his new

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team for '96, Dick Morris was in, while Carville and the rest of the Fab Four were out. Morris insisted on bringing along his own crew, among them Penn and Schoen, New York pollsters known for their work in foreign elections. But to the press, Morris himself was the story—notably the fact that he had worked for several Republicans.

White House counsel Jack Quinn nevertheless decreed in the fall of 1995 that all the new consultants with White House access would have to disclose their clients. Sources say the new group—who called themselves the November Five Group—griped and moaned for weeks. Two others with a piece of the media work, Hank Sheinkopf and Marius Penczner, were not regulars at the Wednesday-night political meetings and therefore were not required to file.

Morris, contacted recently, said he remembers Penn and Schoen's urging him to allow them to hold off disclosing their clients until at least January 1996, so that their client in the Turkish election would not be criticized for hiring high-priced American consultants. Morris agreed to wait, then filed his report in February 1996—thinking that his colleagues were filing theirs as well.

Morris's disclosure report was released to the press, which apparently sought no similar disclosure for the other consultants. Early this year, when asked about their reports, the White House said that Penn and company had not been required to file because, unlike Morris, they worked on campaign matters, not on policy. Some officials drew a further distinction: Only Morris had to file, they said, because only he had a hard pass, with its grant of unfettered access. In fact, Morris never held a hard pass; he and the others were all "waved in," the standard admission procedure for White House visitors.

All this comes as news to Morris, who was unaware until told by this reporter that his colleagues had never filed disclosure reports. "I'm surprised," he said. "There could be no possible policy reason for it. There was no difference at all in the role I was playing and the role Mark Penn was playing. We were basically inseparable in the White House. Our level of access was precisely the same." Though Morris himself had balked at first at filing a disclosure report, he now says it's the appropriate thing to do: "Anyone who is meeting with people in the White House in ways that affect public policy ought to have to disclose other business interests that could be impelling them to make certain decisions."

The White House, however, insists that Penn and Schoen do no more than supply numbers. "This is *Zeitgeist*, this is not policy," says presidential spokesman Mike McCurry. Not everyone agrees. Some insiders claim Penn has replaced Morris as the president's political guru. Others insist Penn is no Dick Morris. "Morris would call the president all the time," said a senior presidential aide. "Mark doesn't impose himself that way. He's available if people want to run something past him, but it's not the same aggressive role." Squier and Knapp still turn up at some weekly political meetings—a White House aide estimates about one out of three.

Schoen said that he and the other consultants prepared disclosure statements but were told not to bother formally submitting them, on the grounds that their work was "polling, not policy" and their "degree of contact was sufficiently limited." As for his work with Jim Guy Tucker's defense, Schoen bristled. Tucker was a longtime client, he said. "He asked me to do it, and I did it, and that's that." Schoen delivered a terse "no" when asked whether he had told Clinton about his jury polling for Tucker or had shared his findings. But another source said Clinton was aware of Schoen's endeavors on Tucker's behalf.

Apparently many Clinton aides did not know that a regular at presidential strategy meetings was also working for a Whitewater defendant. But McCurry brushed this off as a possible reason for the White House's change of heart on disclosure. "You can always insinuate. Got plenty of that every day." Knapp said that as far as he knew, White House lawyers "absolutely and unequivocally" did not change the rules in midstream out of concern that some clients would be embarrassing. "I don't think it's shocking, controversial, or even very interesting that [Penn and Schoen] were working for AT&T. Or that they did jury polling for Jim Guy Tucker. So what? They're a polling firm."

Watchdogs might ask why, if the remaining members of the November Five Group advise on campaigns but not on policy, they are still meeting with the president and top aides long after the election. Actually, Clinton's need for polls is constant and independent of elections; one source reports the pollsters are still running surveys weekly, while another puts the frequency at every other week. "Since the strategies flow in part from the polling, it doesn't seem like a distinction that really holds up," said Paul Hendrie of the Center for Responsive Politics. "At the very least, it raises the question of whether the White House, to avoid political embarrassment, kind of altered its rules on who has to disclose. The word 'Whitewater' was something they didn't want to be hearing. If that is the reason, it's consistent with the kind of disturbing lack of candor . . . we've seen all along, where stories change, rationales change."

Karen Ball, a freelance writer, covered the White House for the* New York Daily News *from 1994 to 1997.

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The Real Al Gore

By Tucker Carlson

In early March, Vice President Al Gore held an impromptu press conference at the White House to explain his role in the administration's growing fund-raising scandals. The appearance—in which Gore simultaneously claimed to be proud of soliciting money from his West Wing office and promised never to do it again—turned out to be an unqualified failure. Gore came off as insincere, slippery, and, most of all, guilty of something. Reporters seemed confused, even shocked by Gore's performance. Why was "a politician of such integrity and personal probity," the *Washington Post* wondered, being so evasive? Why did he sidestep questions, dodge responsibility, give meaningless, contradictory, legalistic answers? "Given his reputation," concluded the *Post* with some surprise, Gore's behavior was—how to put it?—"unexpected."

Actually, the only thing unexpected about Gore is that his true nature has escaped detection for so long. He has not changed. Gore has always been shifty and disingenuous—shiftier and more disingenuous, in fact, than just about anybody currently in national office. If there is anyone capable of standing before a group of competent adults and smiling as he tells utterly implausible tales—all while maintaining an air of moral indignation—it is Al Gore.

He was born to it.

I

Politics has tainted virtually every aspect of Al Gore's life. Months before he was even born, his father, then a congressman from Tennessee, made certain his child's arrival would receive ample, politically valuable publicity. "If I have a baby boy," Albert Gore, Sr. informed the editors of the Nashville *Tennessean*, "I don't want the news buried in the inside of the paper. I want it on page one where it belongs." (And indeed, when Al, Jr. was born at Columbia Hospital for Women in Washington, it was.)

Gore grew up in Washington, went to high school there, then went off to college. In 1969, he graduated from Harvard and joined the Army, becoming one of the very few men from his class to go to Vietnam. He enlisted, not because he liked the Army or supported the war—his mother had offered to move with him to Canada, and Gore considered accepting—but in order to help his father win a Senate race against Republican Bill Brock. Shortly before the election, the two Alberts appeared in a campaign commercial together. The future vice president wore his Army uniform. His father rode into the ad on a white horse. "Son, always love your country," he said.

It didn't work. Brock won the race, and Al Gore went to Vietnam anyway. (In 1994, Gore's parents repaid the sacrifice by giving Peter Boyer of the *New Yorker* copies of embarrassing letters their son had written from Harvard, in which the college student described the U.S. Army as "the best example" of "fascist totalitarianism" and bemoaned the "national madness" of anti-communism.) Gore spent fewer than five months in Vietnam, working as an information officer attached to an engineer brigade.

There is nothing about Gore's record of service in Vietnam he should be ashamed of, but over the years he has felt the need to embellish it nonetheless. During the 1988 presidential race, Gore, who never saw combat or fired a shot in anger, sent out a campaign brochure that strongly implied he had been an infantryman during the war. An accompanying photo showed Gore in a backpack and bush gear, toting an M-16. Several years ago, while touring a flood zone in the Midwest by helicopter, the vice president reminisced out loud about his time in the battle zone. "I used to fly these things with the doors open, sitting on the ledge with our feet hanging down," he said. "If you flew low and fast they wouldn't have as much time to shoot you."

After he returned home, Gore enrolled briefly at Vanderbilt University's divinity school in Nashville—a decision, he explained at the time, he had made "to atone for my sins" in Vietnam. The atonement period didn't last long; Gore soon switched to law school. He also took a job as a reporter on the *Tennessean*, a paper whose coverage had long been friendly to his father. In

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for The Weekly Standard.

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February 1974, Gore wrote an investigative series for the *Tennessean* accusing two Nashville city councilmen, Morris Haddox and Jack Clariday, of soliciting bribes from local developers in return for help on zoning matters. Both Haddox and Clariday were soon indicted. Clariday was convicted of bribery the next year and received a suspended sentence. Haddox, after two trials, was acquitted of all charges.

The stories were the highlight of Gore's work at the newspaper, and for a young reporter they were an achievement. They did not, however, result in a very dramatic outcome, so in later years Gore simply added a better ending by claiming that Haddox and Clariday had received prison terms. There is no question Gore knew better—he had testified in both of Haddox's trials, as well as before the grand jury that indicted him—yet in 1988, Gore told the *Des Moines Register* that his stories about the Nashville city council "got a bunch of people indicted and sent to jail." Meanwhile, Gore's campaign distributed copies of magazine profiles that made the same claim.

II

Almost exactly two years after the city council stories appeared, Gore's career in journalism came to an abrupt end. In early 1976, Democrat Joe Evins announced his retirement from the House. Gore received the news in a phone call and before he hung up the receiver had decided to run. Three days later, Gore quit the newspaper, withdrew from law school only months from graduation, and entered the race. From his family's point of view, Gore's decision seemed like destiny. In his concession speech seven years before, Gore's father had predicted: "Someday, and someday soon, I know that the truth shall rise again in Tennessee!" In November 1976, at 28, Gore fulfilled the prophecy, winning his father's old Fourth District seat in an uncontested general election.

It is never easy for a freshman member of Congress, even one with a famous last name, to get media attention, but Gore soon devised a winning strategy: become the self-appointed spokesman for issues few others understand or care about, master their details, and use them as a platform for providing inflammatory but memorable quotes to the press. Gore achieved his first success in the summer of 1977 when he attacked Gulf Oil. At a hearing into allegations that Gulf had fixed world uranium prices, Gore accused the company of behaving like a "corporate Patty Hearst." The next day his words made the front page of the *Washington Post*, and a muckraker was born.

Not everyone appreciated Gore's overheated and theatrical tactics. The Gulf Oil episode, scolded *Forbes*, "smelled of the notorious and now-defunct House Un-American Activities committee and of the late-Joseph McCarthy's red-baiting." But for Gore, the rewards more than compensated for the criticism. The Gulf settlement alone obliged the oil company to pay $40 million to the Tennessee Valley Authority, one of whose main power plants was located in Gore's district, and another $30 million to businesses in Tennessee. And those were just the monetary benefits. Seven years later, Gore was still using his victory over Gulf in his political ads.

Throughout his career in Congress, Gore continued to bore deeper, and more loudly, into esoteric issues. While in the House, he led the battle to impose nutritional standards for baby formula. Fearing that America's poor could be used "for parts," Gore also championed federal regulation of organ donation. During the 101st Congress, he sponsored a bill to create National Digestive Disease Awareness Month.

From a public relations standpoint, Gore's petit-Naderism was easy to understand, even respect. After all, it worked back home. "Infant formula was an effective issue," sighs a frustrated Republican party official in Nashville. "People in Tennessee just thought, 'Well that's good. We don't want our babies eating dangerous food.'" After edging out a crowded field of opponents in his first primary in 1976, Gore never again faced significant opposition in an election in Tennessee.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Gore sought publicity with relentless intensity. When regular House proceedings were first broadcast live on the radio in 1978, Gore was the first member to speak over the air. A year later, when House proceedings were first televised, Gore again elbowed his way to the front of the queue to deliver the first speech. And the grandstanding on issues continued. Within hours of the space shuttle *Challenger* explosion, Gore was in front of a television camera demanding an "immediate" and "extensive" investigation into NASA.

Gore's calculated histrionics may have kept his name in the paper, but they irritated his colleagues. Republican congressman Joe Skeen once said that when Al Gore ran a subcommittee hearing, "If you got fewer than six cameras it was considered a bust." At a Senate hearing in 1986, Gore asked Democrat Ernest Hollings to yield the microphone so Gore could speak. "No," replied Hollings, exasperated. "I have a hard time getting this mike away from you."

"That know-it-all takes some getting used to," complained Hollings later. "If you look at his career, particularly in the House," says another fellow Demo-

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crat who served with Gore for more than a decade, "it was a career based more so than almost any other I know of on non-controversial issues, like liver transplants. The Gulf War was one of the only issues I can recall when he took a position that was very controversial. But then he was not actively involved in the effort to persuade other people. It was solely a matter of how he would vote."

Actually, in 1987, Gore did have to contend with a controversial issue, though one that had more to do with his wife, Tipper, than with any daring stand he had taken. Two years earlier, both Gores—he as a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, she as the founder of the Parents Music Resource Center testifying before the committee—had been at the center of congressional hearings into the destructive effects of "porn-rock." The hearings became the most highly publicized that Congress had held since Watergate, drawing, it was estimated, more nightly news coverage in one day than the federal budget deficit got in an entire month. Tipper Gore emerged a national celebrity.

THE GORES SOON BEGAN A PR BLITZ DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT THEY WEREN'T PRUDES AT ALL, BUT CULTURALLY AWARE BABY BOOMERS WHO HAD SMOKED POT.

She also drew the scorn of the people who make and sell obscene rock music, and by 1987 this had become a problem. Gore had decided to run for president, and he realized that in order to win, he would need the financial support of his wife's enemies in Hollywood. One afternoon in late October, Al and Tipper Gore found themselves having lunch in the executive dining room at the MCA building in L.A. with Norman Lear, Danny Goldberg, Don Henley, a number of record company presidents, and the lawyer who represents the artist then known only as Prince. The meeting was supposed to be confidential, but one of the entertainment people had the presence of mind to bring a hidden tape recorder and later to leak a tape of the proceedings to a reporter at *Daily Variety*. It's a good thing he did, for the transcript of the Hollywood Summit will in decades to come provide an indispensable resource for historians seeking to understand Al Gore.

The Gores began the lunch with a frenzy of abject apologizing. Tipper went first. The hearings, she now realized, had been a "mistake," one that "sent the wrong message." "I understand that the hearings frightened the artistic community," she said. "If I could rewrite the script I certainly would." Tipper, who had once appeared at a press conference in the 1970s to announce her support of "a ban on the advertising of highly sugared products to children under the age of 12," went on at some length about her opposition to "censorship."

Her husband agreed, adamantly. "I did not ask for the hearing," Gore said, and "I was not in favor of the hearing." But as merely a "freshman minority member of the committee," he explained, there was nothing he could do to stop publicity-hungry Republicans from holding it. The whole event "was not a good idea," Gore concluded, and he was very, very sorry it had ever taken place.

The entertainment people were not satisfied. Danny Goldberg of Gold Mountain Records turned his anger on Tipper Gore. "Are you familiar with blacklisting and how it happened?" he demanded. Before she could answer, Goldberg defined the term for her. Blacklisting, he said, is "when government officials or people close to them start criticizing entertainment."

It got more hostile from there. Record executives and rock stars angrily berated the Gores for more than an hour. The Gores, for their part, took their reeducation meekly. At one point, Irving Azoff of MCA Music told Tipper to "drop the word 'music'" from the name of her group and call it simply the Parents Resource Center. Good idea, said Tipper, who promised to get on it right away. The abuse continued even after the meeting was over. Reached for comment by *Variety*, I.R.S. record chief Miles Copeland said he still thought Tipper Gore's opinions about music were "very destructive and stupid." The Gores, by contrast, released a statement saying they believed the meeting had been "very constructive."

But lunch at MCA was only the beginning. The Gores soon began a PR blitz designed to show that they weren't prudish blacklisters after all, but culturally aware baby boomers sympathetic to the record-buying habits of modern young people. Within two weeks, Al Gore had announced that he and Tipper used to smoke dope from time to time. Mrs. Gore told reporter after reporter about her devotion to Janis Joplin and the Grateful Dead. (During one interview with *People* magazine, Tipper, apparently no great speller, also revealed that she had named her oldest daughter, Karenna, after Tolstoy's suicidal adulteress, Anna Karenina.) "I was one of the earliest Springsteen fans," she told the *Washington Post*, as her husband worked the campaign trail. "I played the drums in high school. . . . You're talking to someone who truly understands rock music. . . . We are liberal-minded people." In

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other words, we're not as uncool as we look. Really.

It was pathetic, degrading, painful to watch. But ultimately it was effective. During his Senate race two years later, Gore received close to $65,000 from music and film executives. In the years since, of course, Hollywood has become an indispensable source of cash for Gore and the president he works for.

III

A man who would make his wife grovel and humiliate herself before record producers for the sake of his political career would probably do just about anything, and some of Gore's opponents seemed to sense this. Shortly before the Iowa caucuses in 1988, political consultant Bill Carrick, then working as Dick Gephardt's campaign manager, gave an unusually harsh assessment of Gore to the *Washington Post*. "I hate him," said Carrick, who went on to describe Gore and his advisers as "the phoniest two-bit bastards that ever came down the pike." Carrick later apologized to Gore for his statements, and by last year had been forgiven and was running the Clinton reelection effort in California. But Gore remained unpopular with many of his former colleagues in Congress, even politically sympathetic Democrats.

As the 1980s progressed, Gore slowly shifted his attention from consumer-safety issues to foreign policy. Though he rarely does now, Gore used to tell a story about how he first became interested in the subject. It was the summer of 1980 (or the winter, or even the next year, depending upon which of the many versions of the story you take as accurate), and Gore was speaking before a group of high-school girls in Tennessee. Toward the end of the speech, Gore asked the girls if they thought the United States and the Soviet Union would engage in a nuclear war during their lifetimes. Virtually all of the girls raised their hands. "How many believe we can change that if we really try?" Gore asked. Only a few raised their hands. Gore was "appalled" and decided at that moment to, as he put it later, "develop a theory of understanding the arms race, different from the way anyone else was talking about it."

He spent the next 13 months consulting with experts and tutoring himself on arms control. According to both friends and enemies, Gore actually did the work, studying diligently for eight hours a week every week, and by the end knew more about defense issues than perhaps any other senator. Gore had indeed mastered the details of the debate. There was just one problem: He still didn't have firm beliefs about foreign policy.

By 1988, nonetheless, Gore was marketing himself as a hawk. As a political strategy, it was inspired and did more than anything else to set Gore apart from the pack of Democratic presidential contenders that year. But it was not particularly accurate. For one thing, Gore was never entirely able to shed the rhetoric of encounter-group foreign policy that so discredited the Democrats of the era. It was "fear" that fueled the Reagan administration's foolish defense buildup, Gore told a group of Soviet doctors at a meeting of the leftist International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War in Moscow in the summer of 1987: "We must be doctors to each other's fears."

On other foreign policy issues, Gore was less hawkish than simply hard to pin down. He simultaneously endorsed the Grenada invasion and the nuclear freeze, and at various times seemed both to support and to oppose the Strategic Defense Initiative. Supporters pointed to his ideologically uneven record as evidence of Gore's independence and integrity. More likely, Gore was doing his best to cover all the bases. On the question of aid to the contras in Nicaragua, says a longtime Republican Hill staffer who worked with him in the 1980s, "Gore was always one of these guys who would dangle the idea that maybe he could be supportive under certain circumstances, though he almost always voted against it. He basically was against it, but he wanted to give the impression that he was responsible and thoughtful."

On most issues, Gore conveyed precisely that impression, mostly because he was relatively intelligent, worked hard, and rarely had to take rigorously consistent stands. (With the contras, predictably, he voted for humanitarian aid, but against military assistance.) When the resolution to support military action in the Persian Gulf arrived in the Senate in early 1991, however, Gore had no choice but to make a clear, highly publicized choice between two positions. In the end, Gore made the right choice. But his calculations had nothing to do with independence or integrity.

Gore's support of the Gulf War was the turning point in his career. For years after, his vote would be held up as proof of his hard-nosed, New Democrat instincts; it is unlikely that Gore would have been picked as Clinton's running mate had he voted differently. Yet he almost did. Just hours before the vote, Gore was still mulling the decision with advisers and friends, including *New Republic* proprietor Marty Peretz and then-New York congressman Steve Solarz. Both Solarz and Peretz argued that voting for the resolution would be in the best interests of the country. Both also pointed out that Gore would pay a political price if he voted against it.

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Peretz and Solarz may have been persuasive, but it was Senate minority leader Bob Dole who made the most compelling case. Between Dole and Gore, it all came down to television.

"Gore went around to the proponents and opponents of the resolution and asked how much floor time he could have depending on how he voted," recalls a Senate staffer. "He wanted a guarantee that he could speak when people could watch him back in Tennessee." A former aide to Dole who was present at the time says Gore was blunt about his offer: "He went to Dole and said, 'If I go with you on this, Bob, am I going to be able to get some good TV time to explain my position?'" Under heavy pressure from the Bush administration to get the resolution passed, Dole agreed to accommodate him, then headed off to see the secretary of the minority, Howard Greene, who penciled in Gore for 20 minutes of prime speaking time.

Gore waited so long to make up his mind that he apparently ran out of time to write a speech for the occasion. "My decision today is the product of an intense, may I say, excruciating, effort to find my way to a place as close to a sense of the ultimate truth in this matter as I am capable of getting," he began, and it got less clear from there. By the sixth paragraph Gore was still wading through preliminary remarks, promising "to strike a balance and to take my stand"; it is characteristic of Gore that he claimed to be able to do both, while actually doing neither. He spent the remainder of the speech congratulating himself on having recognized the Iraqi threat years before the rest of his colleagues, and attacking George Bush.

Gore's bargain with Dole has been well known on Capitol Hill for more than five years, mostly thanks to Dole himself. Desperate as he was for votes, Dole was offended by Gore's shamelessness and opportunism, and he complained about the deal widely afterwards. Steve Solarz, for his part, considers the story too sleazy to believe: "On a matter involving the fate of half a million Americans who were about to be sent into battle, every one of whose life hangs in the balance, not to mention the other, larger American interests involved, to make one's vote—potentially the decisive vote—contingent on whether you get an extra 15 or 20 minutes to speak, would seem to be"—Solarz pauses, at a loss for words—"a total trivialization of an issue of fundamental national interest."

Exactly. And Gore kept up the trivialization long after the war ended. Days after he voted to authorize force in the Gulf, Gore gave a speech on the Senate floor in which he outlined the limits of American objectives there: "No one in a position of responsibility is talking about the conquest of Iraq," he declared. "Any effort to expand our objectives so as to include the military conquest of Iraq would certainly blow apart the core of international consensus upon which all else depends. . . . The removal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait is enough to warrant a suspension of combat operations. That much is clear."

Not clear at all, as it turned out. Eight months later, Gore appeared on *Larry King Live* to attack the Bush administration for following his advice. "I think we made a tragic mistake in the days right after the war in deciding that the best way to maintain stability in Iraq was to leave the Ba'athist regime in power there," Gore said heatedly. The following spring, during a speech in Boston, he again assailed his own previous position, likening Bush's policy of not using military force in Iraq to save Kurdish refugees to Stalin's decision to keep the Red Army out of Warsaw in 1945—"postponing liberation deliberately to give the Nazis just enough time to finish butchering the Polish resistance."

It was among the lowest, most unfair slurs of the campaign, and yet Gore's words received almost no coverage and were reprinted virtually nowhere. Why? Press bias doubtless played a role, but there is another reason: Somehow, even for reporters who cover him, it's hard to imagine Al Gore's being as nasty as he often is. And he is nasty: It was Gore, for instance, who first used the specter of Willie Horton against Michael Dukakis during the 1988 campaign. In 1995, in a single *Larry King* appearance, Gore referred to Republicans as "extremists" no fewer than six times. "His rhetoric is like Bob Dornan's, but nobody notices," says one reporter who has.

Still, in the public mind, Gore remains a nerd—or as Michael Kinsley put it, "an old person's idea of a young person." Gore cultivates this image, aware that there is advantage in being considered too bland to be calculating, and that stiffness is easily mistaken for principle. In 1988, according to the *New York Times*, Gore was advised by a political consultant not to "vary his wardrobe too much." He embraced the suggestion with gusto, "refusing to appear in anything but a blue suit, light blue shirt and red tie." And it's not all contrived. Gore really is a fairly major dork, as even some of his friends acknowledge. (And have long acknowledged—his nickname in high school was "Gorf.")

Marty Peretz, who taught him at Harvard in the 1960s, says he once got a call from Gore asking if the two could meet in Boston for dinner. "There was a certain kind of gravity to his voice," Peretz says, "and I wondered whether he was going to tell me some bad news about himself. We had our meal, and then he said, 'And now I want to talk to you about what I called

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you about.' And he had just read two books on chaos theory. Now, please, I know nothing about chaos theory beyond what he told me. But he got excited by it, maybe more excited than one should."

The excitement didn't end there. Last year, Peretz says, he and his wife, Ann, went to dinner at Gore's official residence in Washington. At one point, Gore took them for a tour of the Naval Observatory on the property. "He spoke for half an insufferable hour," Peretz says, "telling us about the history of astronomy and the history of telescopes in America." Then there was the time last summer, Ann Peretz remembers, when scientists "had just discovered the little piece of Mars. He was ecstatic. He loves all the really advanced technology. He jumps around like a little kid at a new technological insight or advance. He's totally psyched about it."

"A lot of this," Marty Peretz concedes, "people are not interested in. They think it's a little weird."

Both Peretzes take these encounters with Gore as examples of his intellectual seriousness, and they may be. They are also evidence of a deep conviction that one's own momentary philosophical dabblings are, by definition, terribly interesting to others—or, in Gore's case, that they might make good public policy.

At some point during the mid-1980s, Gore, who had supported nuclear-power projects earlier in the decade, became a radical environmentalist. In 1992, he made the mistake of publishing his beliefs in book form. *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* came out just in time to be used against him in the presidential campaign, and the Clinton communications staff spent a good part of the race trying to respond to charges that Gore had gone off the deep end—that he had become, as Admiral James Stockdale put it in the vice-presidential debate, one of those "fanatics that want to overdo this thing." In fact, Gore had become just that. "We now face the prospect of a global civil war between those who refuse to consider the consequences of civilization's ruthless advance and those who refuse to be silent partners in the destruction," Gore writes in a typical passage from page 294.

Global civil war wasn't the kind of "change" Clinton '92 wanted to be associated with, but it was only the beginning in *Earth in the Balance*. On page 304, Gore lets it drop that his "Global Marshall Plan" to save the environment will cost the United States "almost $100 billion a year." Twenty pages later, he calls for the elimination of the internal combustion engine. And those details appear only after hundreds of pages of kooky New Age millenarianism ("Soon we will learn to recognize crescendos in human affairs more easily—and see that they frequently signal the beginning of systematic, chaotic change from one equilibrium to another"), as well as calls for every conceivable kind of tax increase. Page 177 informs readers that "today the evidence of an ecological Kristallnacht is as clear as the sound of glass shattering in Berlin."

IV

Gore's environmentalism is clearly a matter of conviction. And, as such, it is an aberration. Gore doesn't really believe much of what he says in public. He couldn't. Belief requires convictions, and on many subjects, Gore doesn't have any. Take abortion.

For the first 10 years of his career, Gore was a pro-life Democrat. His stand against using government money to pay for abortions—like his position against gay rights legislation—was central to Gore's well-tended image as a "raging moderate," which in turn was critical to his success in Tennessee. Gore's father had lost his seat for becoming too liberal for southern voters, and Gore internalized the lesson. Until at least the mid-1980s, letters Gore's office sent to constituents were bluntly anti-abortion. "As you know, I have strongly opposed federal funding of abortions," began one typical 1984 reply to a voter. "In my opinion, it is always wrong to spend federal funds for what is arguably the taking of a human life." During his seven years in the House, Gore voted with the National Right to Life Committee 84 percent of the time. In 1984, he cast a ballot in favor of the Siljander Amendment, which defined a "person" to include "unborn children from the moment of conception."

Sometime during his run for president, Gore decided to become pro-choice. There is nothing intrinsically dishonest about changing one's position, of course, but Gore refused to admit he had ever been anything but pro-choice. The Siljander Amendment made this pose difficult, yet Gore decided to brazen his way through it anyway. "Since there's a record of that vote, we have only one choice," a Gore political adviser told *U.S. News and World Report* at the time. "In effect, what we have to do is deny, deny, deny. . . . We've muddled the point, and with luck, the attention will turn elsewhere."

For years, Gore stuck to this strategy as tightly as he once had to his blue suits. In 1992, pressed by Tim Russert during a television appearance to explain his former views, Gore barely responded to the question. "I believe that a woman ought to have the right to choose," he said. Gore repeated the phrase, robot-like, seven times. After a while, Russert, and then the rest of the press corps, gave up. And after a while, Gore's previous position on abortion didn't seem relevant.

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Gore now is among the most visible pro-choice crusaders in the country. Yet, he has never lost his desire to play both sides of the issue politically. In January of this year, he gave one of the more emotional speeches of his career, to the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League in Washington. As he recounted acts of violence committed by protesters at abortion clinics, Gore exploded. "We will not let you destroy the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood that is America! We will find you!" he yelled, Khrushchev-like. Gore soon calmed down, and moments later he was boasting of his efforts to make peace with pro-lifers. "Four years ago," he said, "I personally reached out to individuals who are leaders on the other side of this issue, and asked, Is there a way to make common cause in the effort to reduce the number of times women find themselves in a situation where they go through this process of choosing?" The pro-lifers' response, Gore claimed: "We just can't do it."

Gore's statement to NARAL is fascinating for its Orwellian qualities alone—"this process of choosing"—but it is also worth considering for another reason: It is almost certainly untrue. Douglas Johnson, federal legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, heard Gore's speech. Later that week, as it happened, Johnson attended a strategy meeting of the leaders of virtually every significant anti-abortion group in the country, with the exception of the Catholic church. "After my presentation," Johnson says, "I asked if anybody had participated in such a meeting with Al Gore, or had ever heard of it before. And nobody had." Johnson later checked with the Catholic bishops conference. "They also were baffled by this and had never heard such a thing," he says.

Why would Al Gore, who doesn't need the support of pro-lifers (and for the most part, doesn't have it), pretend to court their support? Out of habit, probably. After a lifetime in politics, pretending comes naturally.

Not even politics, however, accounts for Gore's willingness to exploit his family's tragedy for political gain. Consider Gore's speeches at the last two Democratic conventions. In 1992, during his address to delegates, Gore described in excruciating detail the car accident that nearly killed his only son three years before. "Tipper and I watched as he was thrown 30 feet through the air and scraped another 20 feet on the pavement after hitting the ground," Gore recounted. "I ran to his side and held him and called his name, but he was limp and still, without breath or pulse. His eyes were open with the empty stare of death . . ." It went on.

"The worst thing about Gore," former senator Eugene McCarthy said later, "was how he read that heavy stuff right off the TelePrompTer." But that wasn't the worst part. The worst part was that Gore's account of his son's accident wasn't even original. He had lifted it almost word-for-word from the introduction to his eco-opus, *Earth in the Balance*. (It is a book laced with glimpses of Gore's signature ghoulishness. At one point he describes the overgrazing of pasture land as "a crushing blow, like a dashboard striking the forehead of a child.")

At the next Democratic convention four years later, Gore again used the suffering of his relatives to make a polemical point. Over the course of 17 paragraphs, Gore explained how watching his sister's agonizing death from lung cancer—"savaged by that terrible disease . . . she could barely retain consciousness. We sometimes didn't know if she could hear what we were saying or recognize us"—gave him new appreciation for President Clinton's anti-smoking initiatives.

Gore recounted his last conversation with his sister: "Do you bring me hope?" she asked, "her eyes focused tensely right at me." Gore didn't answer. Instead, he said, "'I love you.' And then I knelt by her bed and held her hand. And in a very short time, her breathing became labored and then she breathed her last breath. . . . And that is why until I draw my last breath, I will pour my heart and soul into the cause of protecting our children from the dangers of smoking."

The day Nancy Hunger died must have been a very busy one for Al Gore, for at some point during the same day, July 11, 1984, he also found time to give a speech before the Kiwanis Club in Knoxville, across the state from his sister's deathbed. He also squeezed in an interview with a wire-service reporter. Whether he managed to do these things before or after his sister's last words to him is not clear, since Gore didn't mention her in the UPI interview he gave. Instead, he criticized his opponent in that year's Senate race, Victor Ashe, and talked about the specifics of their upcoming televised debates.

It is clear that, lung-cancer death or not, Gore didn't talk much about curbing smoking that year. "I can remember in 1984, when he was running for Senate, having a couple of long conversations with him," says a newspaper reporter who covered Gore. "He was talking explicitly about wooing the tobacco vote, and about how he was trying to make a distinction between the tobacco farmers and the tobacco industry. He was willing to call the tobacco industry Merchants of Death kind of thing, but the tobacco farmers were stout-hearted individuals."

As it turned out, the tobacco industry wasn't that bad, either. Gore, for years after his sister's death, took

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money from tobacco companies, even bragged about being a tobacco farmer himself. Just 13 days after Nancy Gore Hunger died from tobacco in 1984, Gore received a $1,000 campaign contribution from the U.S. Tobacco Company PAC.

There is a lot of competition, but Al Gore may be the biggest phony in the White House today. Don't tell that to his supporters, though. They'll never believe it. In 1985, Jimmy Knight resigned as director of the Alabama Democratic party, citing the corrosive influence of liberals on the national party. "We in Alabama reserve the right to discriminate against homosexuals," he said defiantly. Shortly before he resigned, Knight hosted a dinner for Gore, and his support has continued. Knight no longer holds party office, but he remains a fervent fan of the vice president's. It appears at first an unlikely alliance. Al Gore—Harvard-educated, Washington-bred, the man who pushed Clinton to make good on his promise to let gays serve in the military—would seem to be the embodiment of all that Knight dislikes in his party. Knight doesn't see it that way. But then, he doesn't see Al Gore that way, either. "He's a moderate," says Knight resolutely. "He's always been a moderate." ♦

Confederate Nation

By Noemie Emery

And the word came down from above: Educators in the state of Texas were commanded to defy and circumvent orders enforcing a colorblind doctrine endorsed by American voters and citizens and backed up by federal courts. Did these orders issue from the mouths of Dixiecrat segregationists fighting civil-rights groups *and* the federal government? Not quite. Civil-rights groups and the federal government—at least the part of it ruled by Bill Clinton—were the ones fighting to retain color-based preference in the teeth of opposition from the public, the Constitution, and the courts. Indeed, the office that issued the orders (which have since been abandoned) was the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education.

Civil-rights activists aping the machinations of the segregationists, and the Old South before them? This could shock only someone who has not yet noticed how close the New Left has come to the Old South in both tactics and spirit, as the Left and the Right have changed sides.

The Right now wants a national culture, a common transethnic identity. Liberals, on the other hand, stand for the things that divide. The things that they back tend to fragment the culture: bilingualism, multiculturalism, separate classes on campus, districts designed to compass a single skin color. They stress differences, exaggerate differences, try to codify differences in law. They run blacks as "blacks" and women as "women" for office, implying therein that these people are "different"—a claim that the Right now denies.

Conservatives see one Union, composed of free people. Liberals see a loose web of tribal affinities. John C. Calhoun, theoretician of the antebellum South, would have understood. He saw states with rights above and beyond the Union; the liberals see states of mind. They are the harbingers of the new Confederate Nation.

Calhoun's great enemy was Andrew Jackson, a nationalist and a democrat who built his base on farmers and artisans. Jackson became what historian Richard Hofstadter called "the hero of the lower and middling elements of American society, who believed in expanding opportunity through equal rights." In 1832, Jackson broke with Calhoun and forced the South Carolinian from the national ticket. But 20 years later, the Democrats had become Calhoun's party. Democrats defended the planters who subsisted on slavery (the final expression of race-based preferment). Meanwhile, the middle classes of the North and West passed through the Whigs to the Republican party and to Abraham Lincoln, Jackson's political heir.

A century later, the pattern repeated: FDR's party

Noemie Emery is a writer living in Fairfax, Va., whose work appears frequently in THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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of equal rights and the national interest became the province of the special-interest groups. Civil-rights groups became more exotic. John Kennedy's "equality of treatment" became Lyndon Johnson's "equality as a result."

Results were measured in numbers, which became an obsession. Strange things began to occur. Different standards emerged for black and white students. The Birmingham fire department, taken to court for not hiring blacks, was taken to court by whites some years later, when a black who scored 86th on a test for lieutenant was promoted over a white who scored 6th. In November 1969, Democrats took a step that still haunts them, when a "reform" commission under George McGovern voted to impose numerical quotas on the delegations sent to their national conventions by the states.

At the 1972 Democratic convention, a South Carolina delegation survived a challenge that it had not met its quota on women. But an Illinois delegation, duly elected, was ejected for being diversity-impaired. The first Confederate to run on the Democrats' ticket, McGovern lost 49 states to his rival, eight years after Johnson, running as the integrationist candidate, beat the states-rights camp in the Democratic party to its knees. The same fate befell Walter Mondale, another CSA leader, who in 1984 carried affirmative action to its ultimate power, attempting to place in the line of succession a vastly underqualified three-term member of the House whose only reason for being on the ticket was that she could be referred to as "she."

The states taken—one each out of 50—by McGovern and Mondale were liberal, and from the northern sector. The Confederacy had not died. It had simply moved northward, to the liberal Ivy League strongholds, where its largely white and insulated legions formed a clique not unlike the southern planters—privileged, elite, and out of touch. These, not the rising black middle classes, became the objects of pique for defecting Democrats, who were more against burning flags than for burning crosses as they moved into the Reagan era and defined themselves by their values.

In the planter class was Michael Dukakis, Ashley Wilkes out of Brookline, who was roundly defeated when his views on power, the Pledge, and the treatment of felons were exposed by Lee Atwater, a Gingrich precursor and prototype white southern male. Atwater began his career with Strom Thurmond, whose arc is instructive: A segregationist Democrat—Dixiecrat—segregationist Republican—he would in late life defend Clarence Thomas, a black conservative married to a white activist woman, against the now-racist Left. Thurmond's journey parallels the Republican party's in the past 30 years. The Republican party, to which some southern racists fled in the 1960s away from the federal imposition of civil-rights laws, has become the party of choice for the integrationist faction, unhappy with race-conscious remedies.

Civil-rights lobbies and their tool, the Democratic party, want federal power—expanded, invasive, vast federal power—to enforce their complex agenda. But they want all this power to break *down* the Union: the federal engine of Jackson and Lincoln, in pursuit of the goals of Calhoun. Calhoun, says his biographer Margaret Coit, "saw the country . . . as a union of discordant minorities, each with a right to freedom and self-determination," composed of "states, not individuals . . . an experiment in diversity . . . based on the rights of the people to choose their own way of life."

The supporters of the modern concept of multiculturalism could not put it better. In 1972, McGovern's convention defined as essential "the right to be different, to maintain a cultural or ethnic lifestyle or heritage, without being forced into a compelled homogeneity." A decade before, another Democrat stated, "This nation was never made to be a unit of one, but a unit of many . . . the true brotherhood of America [is] in respecting separateness and uniting in effort. . . . If we amalgamate into one unit, the freedom of our development is gone." A black-power unit, seeking separate studies? No. George Wallace—"segregation forever"—circa 1963. George Wallace, multicultural hero. George Wallace, liberal before his time.

George Wallace, meet George McGovern, meet multiculturalism. Lani Guinier, meet John C. Calhoun, concerned, like herself, with minority power, and in much the same turn of phrase. Calhoun, says Mrs. Coit, "believed 'it was not democracy when 51% of the people have a moral right to coerce 49%.'"

Guinier says, "This system cruelly overcompensates the majority. A candidate who wins with even 50.5% . . . gets 100% of the power, while someone with 49.5% gets nothing." Calhoun said majority rule had "the major advantage of simplicity." Guinier warns of the "simple-minded notions of majority rule."

Both devised ways to thwart public opinion. Guinier favors "legislative supermajorities for passing laws, and . . . a minority veto." Calhoun created the "concurrent majority," where each bloc had added votes on concerns of its own borders, federal laws it disliked. Each wished to empower blocs, and to add to their number. "Territorial districting cannot recognize dispersed interests," Guinier tells us. "Women who would like to identify as women are not recognized per

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se." She wants to bolster the power of groups, against individuals, and the general interest. So, of course, did Calhoun. "Calhoun visualized a Congress of strictly defined group representation," Coit tells us, "the rise of a sort of minority control."

Both think in terms of channeling power from the individual and the central government to the organized and vocal interest groups. Guinier thinks in terms of "opening the system up to *groups* of voters." The individual voter, the distinct human being, whose allegiance belongs to the culture in general, does not speak to her interest. Nor, of course, to Calhoun's. Their idea of freedom is that of the group from majority influence. Their idea of difference is that of one group from another. The right of people to differ *within* groups does not get their attention. For that they have no time at all.

A possible menace to unit cohesion, freedom of thought is fought down. As Richard Hofstadter writes of Calhoun and his theories, "The concurrent majority itself was a device without relevance to the protection of dissent, but designed specifically to protect a vested interest of considerable power. . . . Professor Clement Eaton . . . placed him first among those politicians who 'created stereotypes in the minds of the southern people, that produced intolerance.' . . . It was minority privileges, rather than rights, that he really proposed to protect." Civil-rights lobbies also create stereotypes that produce intolerance, describing all critics as fascists and racists. They have vested interests in their position as spokesmen. The impulse to censor is one and the same.

In his mammoth history of the American people, Samuel Eliot Morison describes the slow death of all kinds of discussion as the South slid to war. "Public criticism of slavery was suppressed in the South by the force of public opinion, even where laws were lacking. Mails from the North and England were examined and 'purified.' . . . Laws were passed against criticism outside the South of southern institutions. . . . The abolition agitation, instead of making converts, engendered a closing of minds."

In their book *Chain Reaction*, Thomas and Mary Edsall reported, "As liberalism came under siege in the late 1960s, many on the Left developed a dangerous intellectual intolerance . . . spurred on by fear of information damaging to liberal goals. . . . Liberalism became unreceptive, if not hostile, to new, contradictory, and sometimes frightening information," creating "an almost censorious set of prohibitions" against even the mention of things they found troubling. In the old South, moral qualms about slavery were considered unthinkable. Moral qualms concerning abortion are considered unthinkable in today's civil-rights movement. Southern dissenters were denounced as unnatural beings. Gloria Steinem went to Texas to call Kay Bailey Hutchison a "female impersonator" because Steinem disliked Hutchison's political theories. Former NAACP head Benjamin Chavis called Clarence Thomas an "extra-terrestrial being" because he disliked his decisions from the bench.

In 1857, Morison tells us, a book called *The Impending Crisis* was published in the South, and then suppressed. In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family* was denounced so savagely by black and white liberals that all discussion of the issues it raised was curtailed.

Calhoun saw the South oppressed by "hostile legislation," a "handfull, in the midst of an overwhelming majority," a "fixed and hopeless minority," and said blacks "live in a different world from whites." As Hofstadter says, "Southern leaders reacted with the most intense and exaggerated anxiety to every fluctuation in the balance of sectional power." Today, movement leaders greet changes of policy with charges of genocide. The common emotion is fear.

"To comprehend the southern planter," Morison tells us, "we must remember that his social system was on the defensive against the rest of the civilized world." The liberal today is likewise embattled, his preference for the arbitrary and sometimes secret workings of the courts and agencies reflecting what the Edsalls called "the staggering difficulties of maintaining majority support for the liberal agenda" as it has come to be accepted and defined. Facts are distorted, terms misapplied, associations made with no basis in logic. As Morison says, Calhoun "gave proslavery doctrine the sanction of his name and character, and so cunningly combined it with American prepossessions that slavery appeared no longer the antithesis of, but an essential ingredient of, democracy." Calhoun called the slave system "a positive good, . . . the most solid and durable foundation on which to rest free and stable political institutions."

Civil-rights leaders today reach back to their prepossessions, attaching old words to a different agenda. Words, in their mouths, come to lose their old meanings. In time, they mean nothing at all. "Fairness is part of the dream," Dianne Feinstein told Californians in 1990, pledging, in the interests of an "open" government, to "appoint women . . . and people of color" in proportion to their population in the state. Fairness is bias. Openness is excluding some people. Ranking people by color is "part of the dream." Quo-

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tas (which supposedly do not exist) lead to "inclusion," creating "diversity," and different cultural viewpoints. But these different ideas had better be uniform, or be axed by the movement establishment. For, as Roger Wilkins explains, "There is some political and intellectual behavior that you indulge in that keeps you from being a black person," while Derrick Bell tells us, "Diversity is not served by someone who looks black and thinks white." Inclusion is best served by excluding dissenters. Diversity is uniformity of thought.

It is in discussions of voting-rights matters that this reaches critical mass. "The right to vote meant little if the political rules . . . diluted the impact of black votes," ran a story in the *New York Times*, speaking of "district boundaries that spread minorities over areas where they stood little chance of getting elected," as if the right to vote and getting elected were one and the same.

But if one has a vote, how can it "mean little?" Does the vote of a black person lack "impact" if it is not cast as part of a bloc? Is there a "right" to election to office? If so, how is it enforced? "In some areas, black voters remain unable to elect officials who can or will diligently defend their interest," Guinier writes. "Sometimes, this . . . is the product of election rules that prevent black voters from electing any candidates," sometimes of standards that "simply count black faces" without knowing whose faces they are. Blacks elected by whites are not legitimate voices. Nor are whites elected by blacks. Only when blacks elect blacks are "voting rights" granted, and sometimes, not even then: These must have a "cultural and psychological view of group solidarity" that makes them "authentically black." Thus, black groups back whites against black conservatives, while deploring the dearth of black faces. Feminists rail against "locker-room government," then attack female moderates, backing men in Senate races who are more fanatic on the movement line. (They then say the Senate has too many men.) In 1994, Tipper Gore went to California to urge female votes for Dianne Feinstein and Kathleen Brown in the interests of sisterly feeling. She did not take this message to Maine or to Texas, where Republican women faced liberal men. These ideas give raise to the call for rigged voting districts, to "maximize" black voting power. Alas, no one has yet found a district where women reside without men.

As promised, these districts brought non-whites to office, swelling the congressional Black Caucus to a modern high of 41. But it stranded them in a Congress where their clout was diminished: Leaching them out left bleached districts around them, that tipped to Republican rule. Maximizing black power required diluting it—spreading it out to play balance-of-power. That was a point not lost on the four black congressmen who went to court to try to *stop* a redistricting measure in Ohio in 1993.

The rationale for all this is that (1) voting rights means voting for one of one's own color; (2) whites will not vote for blacks. But while liberals in Congress backed themselves into corners, others were building bases of power, attracting the backing of many white voters, on the basis of common ideas. Minneapolis and Seattle (75 percent white) now have black mayors. Black Republicans came very close to state office in Connecticut and Mississippi. Gary Franks and J.C. Watts won races for Congress on conservative platforms in districts less than 10 percent non-white.

BLACKS WERE FIRST HERDED INTO ODDLY SHAPED DISTRICTS IN THE 1870S, ONLY THEN IT WAS CALLED KEEPING BLACKS IN THEIR PLACE.

Republicans are slowly moving toward a post-racial politics while Democrats move in a different direction. Districts like the ones created in the 1980s were first seen in Mississippi in the 1870s, as whites sought to hold power, herding blacks off into one oddly shaped district, while they held the rest of the state. Then, of course, it was not called Black Power, it was called keeping blacks in their place.

The Confederate South had an array of racial classifications, based not merely on color, but gradations of it. The American government is heading in that direction as well. In its current Census, there are four, or five, or six groups of races: American Indian or Alaskan native; Asian or Pacific Islander; black and white.

"Whites" (who technically include American Indians) are then divided into Hispanic and non-Hispanic whites. Hispanics are not a race, are not more distinctive than other white ethnics, and have never been subject to legal segregation or slavery. But for the purposes of grievance deployed by the new Confederate lobbies, they qualify as a duly aggrieved racial minority.

Currently, the American government is considering the addition of a new label—"multi-racial"—to accommodate the growing number of mixed-race Americans, who do not want to be forced by their government into a formal denial of one or more parts of

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their heritage. "The policy implications could be overwhelming," the *Washington Times* reported. "Race is a key factor in drawing boundaries for congressional districts and in funding more than 200 federal programs. The multi-racial category could affect federal funding for affirmative action programs and shift congressional maps." In Nazi Germany, the "wrong" classification could land you in Auschwitz. In Apartheid South Africa, it could condemn you to virtual slavery. In the Confederacy, you could be the chattel of your own blood relations. In the post-Civil War South, you could lead a separate and most unequal life. In the newly Confederate American order, it can only cheat you out of a college place or federal contract you had earned on the merits. But Nazi Germany, the old South Africa, and the South of the Confederacy and segregation never made claims to be fair.

The case is advanced, by those who promote them, that these first sets of race-based classifications were based on intentions malignant in nature, while the intentions of the last group are "benign." This misses the point and the heart of the matter: The classification of people into racial and/or ethnic classes, and the different treatment of them on this basis, is *always* malignant, no matter what the intention of that act is claimed to be.

As the argument went in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, it is the "unconstitutionality of the assortment" that is wrong. It is destructive, insulting, immoral, and potentially fatal to the moral underpinnings of the American nation, whose promise has always been that a man is more than the sum of his ethnic components; that this nation is not an aggregation of small, defined, ethnic fragments, but one Union, composed of free men. It is a matter of whether race is the one thing that defines people completely, or merely one of many things that help to describe them. It is a matter of whether people belong to themselves, and can find their own values; or whether they "belong" to the race and its so-distant spokesmen. It is a matter of whether personal identity is one's own possession, or something determined by others. Ultimately, it is a question of whether or not one is free. It is safe to say that while Calhoun would not have approved of the direction in which preferences flowed under the system attacked by California's Proposition 209, he would understand, and approve, the theory behind it. Lincoln would probably find it appalling. Whose side do we want to be on?

An immigrant nation, a refugee nation, a nation of mongrels descended from outcasts, America stands for three things. The belief that identity is not race-connected. That different races can combine in one people. That the right to form, hold, and express one's opinions is the greatest civil right of them all. All these are under attack by the civil-rights movement, which not only aggravates the old fault lines of race, creed, and language, but actively seeks out new lines of division, based upon culture and sex. Sex is a class, and a new source of grievance. So too is "preference." So are disabilities of any kind. Women are a "caste and a class," a political entity. Each ethnic group has its own special culture, made up in turn of like-minded people, connected by genetic affinity. Race creates character, passed on by blood.

And back again we are thrust into the CSA. In 1926, the Ku Klux Klan compared the "remarkable race character" of the colonial settlers to that of the recent immigrant, "inalterably fixed in his instincts, character, thought and interests by centuries of racial selection and development, . . . fixedly alien to America and all it means." Too different to merge, these are better kept separate, past the danger of contamination. In 1954, Sen. James Eastland issued this protest to the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*: "Segregation promotes racial harmony. It permits each race to follow its own pursuits and its own civilization . . . desired and supported by the vast majority of both races. . . . It is the law of nature. It is the law of God." In 1986, black playwright August Wilson explained why he insisted on a black director: "We have different ideas about religion, different manners of social intercourse, . . . different ideas about language, . . . a different way of responding to the world."

In 1919, the NAACP urged the "abolition of color-hyphenation, and the substitution of 'straight American' to describe all American citizens." In 1994, it pressed the use of the term "African-American" to mark off one singular kind. In 1915, W.E.B. DuBois wrote, "The human contact of human beings must be increased . . . to bring into closer contact and mutual knowledge the black and white people." In 1995, there was precious little "close contact" on movement-drenched campuses, where minority students asked for and got separate dorms, classes, clubs, proms, and yearbooks, and (to quote Henry Louis Gates, Jr.) "ghettoized programs, where students and members of the faculty can sit around and argue about whether a white person can think a black thought."

Parties change, the players change, the skin tone may change, but the war remains constant: national pride against local allegiance. Integration against racial ties. The party of Lincoln should return to its roots, pick up the flag of the Unionist party, and engage the new Confederates in civil war.

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Programs that help individuals reach their potential should be supported and strengthened. On the other hand, those that hold different standards for races and genders ought to be fought and destroyed. At the same time, Republicans should start a campaign to get all racial classifications removed from the Census, starting right here and now. The separation of American citizens into arbitrary (and incomplete and incomprehensive) ethnic groupings sends a message that is terrible in its effects. Countries and causes that classify people by background or color always end badly. We are in company we should not want to keep. We cannot reach Lincoln's country by way of Calhoun. These detours back to Confederate theory have taken us far off our course. We are now at a point where hard-working "A" students from backgrounds like Lincoln's (and Jackson's) are barred from the places they earn, because of skin color; where bright black students underachieve on purpose to fill a mistaken idea of their identity; where bi-racial students are pressured to align with one "side" or the other. Pressures like these may exist in the culture, but the state ought to fight them, not back them, much less urge them on. The government is not the Racial Police.

In the 1860s, Republicans moved the country past slavery. In the 1960s, the Democrats moved it beyond segregation. Now, as we enter the next century, Republicans should move us all beyond race, past the detour of Confederate theories, and back to the Unionist core. The reference texts are easy to come by. Guinier and Calhoun (and George Wallace) sound like each other; today's leaders should sound like Lincoln. And like those liberals, John Kennedy and Martin Luther King. They were integrationists and American patriots. They believed in the melting pot, not the mosaic.

King said, "Whether we believe it or not, and whether the racist understands it or not, our music, our poets, our material prosperity . . . are amalgams of black and white." Kennedy said, "Over the long run, we are going to have a mix. That would be racially, socially, ethnically and geographically, and that is finally, the best way." King said, "There can be no separate black path to power and fulfillment, . . . there can be no separate white path to power and fulfillment, short of social disaster, that does not recognize the necessity of sharing that power with black aspirations for freedom and justice."

Kennedy spoke of an intertwined culture, where "the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened." But the current civil-rights movement threatens the rights of men daily, in the name of a divisive and race-coded culture. This is not what its founders envisioned. As King said, "We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. That will be the day not of the white man and not of the black man. That will be the day of man as man." ♦

Why Tony Blair Isn't Like Clinton

By Irwin M. Stelzer

Bill Clinton's spinmeisters are doing all they can to have the president bask in the reflected glory of Britain's new prime minister. Like the leader of "New Labour," the leader of the "New Democrats" has recreated his party by moving it from left to center. Like Tony Blair, Bill Clinton has discovered the virtue of fiscal probity; like Tony Blair, Bill Clinton has made education his number-one priority. Indeed, the similarity extends to their personal lives, say Clinton's hacks at the White House and in the media: Both are lawyers married to lawyers who are smarter and lefter than their husbands.

The British have a word for this: rubbish. I know Tony Blair. And Bill Clinton is no Tony Blair.

Start with the efforts of the two leaders to rebuild their parties. Blair has actually done it. The voting procedures that permitted the trade unions to dominate policy and select candidates are gone, replaced by a one-member, one-vote rule. The party's election

Irwin M. Stelzer, a frequent contributor, is director of regulatory policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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manifesto—its platform—was approved directly by the membership, rather than by a small group of left-wing ideologues. This has institutionalized and made permanent—or at least as permanent as these things can be in politics—the party's shift to the center.

Clinton, meanwhile, has tacked this way and that. After his first election, he deferred to the Old Democrat grandees in Congress and to the Left in his party on everything from tax increases to gays in the military. And in order to assure his reelection he signed an Old Democrat pact with the trade unions, promising, among other things, to deny jobs to workers who choose not to join unions, in return for a $35 million trade-union television campaign attacking the Republicans. The result is that the Democratic party remains in thrall to its unreconstructed wing on trade policy, environmental policy, abortion, and a host of other issues. When Bill Clinton leaves office he will leave having had no enduring effect on the structure or direction of his party.

Then there is the matter of macroeconomic policy. Blair and his chancellor, Gordon Brown, are pledged to live within the spending limits set by the outgoing Tories for at least the next two years. These limits call for a virtual freeze on real spending on welfare. Clinton, meanwhile, has just suckered the Republicans into a budget deal that at best contains and quite possibly expands the existing welfare state. The age of big government, it seems, is back in America.

Education is another area where Clinton supporters claim to see a remarkable similarity between their man and the new British prime minister. True, both men have stated that education is their highest priority (actually, Clinton has several highest priorities, depending on the audience). True, too, neither man has expressed much interest in school vouchers, the only instrument that can transfer power from the producers of education services (teachers' unions) to the consumers (parents and students). But Blair has at least been willing to threaten the teachers with closure of under-performing schools; not a word from the president about denying federal funds to schools that don't teach children to read, write, and do sums.

Then there is the small matter of character. Everyone in the Blair entourage seems to have read *Primary Colors* and the tabloid press's extensive coverage of the president's less-than-complete devotion to family values. To the strait-laced Blairites such behavior is incomprehensible, something characteristic of Tory ministers too long in power and of French politicians, but unacceptable in serious public men. In this they may be naive, and indeed may find themselves eating a healthy portion of crow should allegations concerning the sex lives of several leading Labour figures prove well founded—an appetizing prospect for Britain's ever-alert tabloids. But Blair himself is clearly beyond reproach—a churchgoer even when television cameras are not present and, by today's standards, prudish in his attitudes toward his familial responsibilities. Clinton might think it great to flirt with a stewardess on Air Force One for the amusement of the press corps; Blair's campaign bus was a model of probity—not even the usual gender-conscious banter characteristic of close-knit groups working under pressure.

Not content with a Bill-Tony analogy, the American press has come up with a Hillary-Cherie comparison. Both, granted, are lawyers and have political leanings to the left of their husbands'. But the analogy stops there. Cherie Blair was willing to expose her views to the electorate by running for parliament in 1983. She lost. Hillary has never risked such exposure and defeat. Cherie has made a success of the practice of law quite on her own; Hillary operated out of an Arkansas law firm that had as its main claim to fame its access to her husband; whether she would have succeeded in a different environment we will never know, as she never chose to risk finding out. Hillary campaigned with her husband and stood by him through what must have been difficult times for her because she has a political agenda and Bill is the instrument for its realization. Cherie campaigns with her husband, although she has no discernible ambition to be assistant prime minister (there's no "two for the price of one" talk) and will now return to the practice of law. Just as Tony is no Bill, Cherie is no Hillary.

All of this misplaced analogizing seems to serve two purposes. First, it enhances the prestige of the various Clinton advisers who attached themselves to the Blair campaign. Stan Greenberg can now claim to have been an architect of the Blair triumph, and George Stephanopoulos can let drop stories of his frequent telephone calls to the Blair campaign team. Never mind that in truth it was no American Clintonista, but Britain's very own Peter Mandelson, Blair's enormously talented spin doctor, who crafted the techniques and imposed the discipline that allowed Blair to capitalize on the Tories' massive and well-deserved unpopularity.

There is a second reason liberal commentators find the analogy between Clinton and Blair so attractive. It allows them to argue that both Britain and America now have leaders who have slain the conservative dragon. In America, Clinton has neutered Gingrich; in Britain, Blair has destroyed the party of inequality and privilege. Conservatives are, so the claim goes, every-

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where in retreat before triumphant, compassionate left-of-center politicians.

Whether that is true in the United States I leave to the experts. It is clearly not true in Blair's Britain. For one thing, the magnitude of Labour's victory has been overstated. Labour polled fewer votes than did the Tories when they won the 1992 general election, partly because voter turnout dropped from 78 percent to 71 percent as disgusted Tories stayed home in droves. This comparatively modest popular vote translated into a huge parliamentary majority because of tactical voting by Liberal Democratic voters, who voted for Labour in constituencies in which their votes, combined with those of true Labour supporters, would ensure the defeat of Tory candidates. Labour voters reciprocated to elect 46 Liberal Democrats.

More important, it is no stretch to say that the real winner of Britain's general election is Margaret Thatcher. Recall that it was Thatcher who cut Britain's confiscatory marginal tax rate from 98 percent on some forms of income to 40 percent in an effort to restore the incentive to work and, in the case of entrepreneurs, to dare. This in the face of a Labour party famous for its hatred of the rich (well-heeled champagne socialists of course excepted) and for a tax policy designed to squeeze the rich "until the pips squeak."

Enter Blair and "New Labour." After a brief skirmish with his Left, which wanted to raise the top marginal rate to 50 percent, Blair announced that the top rate would stay at Thatcher's 40 percent. As Blair put it on the stump, "We want to see people do well, we are not opposed to success." Vague, yes, but backed by a specific pledge to freeze marginal tax rates.

And by an understanding that in this day of mobile capital and mobile people, taxes are a limited tool for transferring income from rich to poor. Whether Blair has sold his colleagues on this view is hard to say. But the omens are good. For example, David Blunkett, the new education and employment secretary, has deep roots on the Labour left: He is "one of Labour's old socialist soldiers," according to the *Economist*. Yet he told a Birmingham audience, "Cash transfers are no longer an option either politically or economically. The international money markets . . . and the aspirations of a massively growing middle class make the realities very different from a bygone era." Thatcher couldn't have said it better.

Then there is the question of privatization. Lady Thatcher, as she now is, sold off the overmanned, inefficient electric, gas, telephone, airline, steel, and other companies, to a chorus of boos from a Labour party organized to keep those commanding heights of the economy in public ownership. Indeed, Clause Four, a feature of the party's constitution since 1918, pledged it to the nationalization of those industries—and others. Enter Blair. In a bruising battle with Labour's old guard, the new prime minister forced the repeal of Clause Four. Worse, from the point of view of his still-not-inconsiderable left wing, he has hinted at the possibility of out-Thatchering Thatcher. In part out of a desire to increase the flow of revenues to the treasury (the government's budget is far out of balance for this stage of the business cycle), and in part out of a recognition that there are many things that private-sector managers can do better than public-sector bureaucrats, Blair is considering privatizing still more public-sector assets, perhaps including the air traffic control system. To say that such actions—indeed, even the thought of such actions—by a Labour politician would have been inconceivable before Margaret Thatcher made her appearance on Britain's political stage is to understate the case by a wide margin.

There's more. Blair has pledged to crack down on the young hoodlums who are increasingly terrorizing British shopkeepers and the public with burglaries and muggings. It is no longer deemed safe to wear a Rolex watch on the busiest streets of London, and drivers of Rolls-Royces, Jaguars, and Range Rovers caught in traffic jams now must be on the alert to foil smash-and-grab jewelry thefts by young thugs. The new prime minister has promised to institute a teenage curfew, to cut in half the time between apprehension of young offenders and their sentencing, and to get tough on them in as many ways as his limited control of the courts will allow.

Blair's emphasis on law and order—modified, it is true, by a Left-pleasing reference to attacking the causes of crime as well as crime itself—is truly revolutionary for a party that has historically tended to side with the crooks against the good guys. And it is no campaign ploy, to be forgotten now that office has been won. For it stems from a sincere belief that there is right and wrong, that wrong should be punished, and that individuals should be responsible for their actions.

Which brings us to the welfare state. Blair is well aware that financial constraints preclude any major expansion of welfare programs and that the funds he plans to snare through his one-time tax on "utility windfall profits" won't go very far. That practical fact reinforces his view that more is not better when it comes to welfare. He sees such handouts (though he is too much the politician to use that word) as debilitating and as promoting anti-social behavior damaging to both the recipient and the society that makes such largesse available. He comes as close to being a Charles

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Murray disciple—get the incentives right—as a Labour leader dares. So he wants to make work more attractive than staying at home and to deny benefits to anyone who refuses to participate in training and seek a job. In the hope of developing concrete plans to reform welfare, he has named Frank Fields, one of the most innovative thinkers in this field, to the position of Social Security minister.

All good conservative stuff, and it comes mixed with compassion (a word not yet stripped of meaning in Britain) for the truly unfortunate. But Blair has a lot to learn about the hard-core underclass and its deep-rooted disinclination to prefer work to the dole, or honest work at low wages to dishonest work at rewards that buy Nikes and flashy clothes. No reliance on the mush that is the communitarianism he finds so attractive, no appeal for "a unified society, . . . a civic society," is going to help Blair solve the social problems created by the voluntarily unemployed, what in her more Victorian moments Margaret Thatcher might have called "the undeserving poor." He may be offended to the depths of his soul by Lady Thatcher's famous remark that there is no such thing as society, there are only individual men and women, and there are families. But he has yet to articulate a coherent view of just how he plans to create the "better Britain" that he promised at every stop in our daylong whirl through the hinterland.

Instead, he offered what appeared at first to be a truly Newt-onian idea, a contract with Britain. This "contract," personally drafted and signed by Blair, contains promises of job training, improved educational standards, and such. But, given his pledge to live within the spending limits set by the Tories for the next two years, Blair had no choice but to keep his commitments extraordinarily limited. None of the boldness of the Newt of yesteryear here.

Nor much that is different from what Lady Thatcher might have done had her party colleagues not assassinated her, at a cost last week's election has

The Anti-Tory Tidal Wave

by Michael Barone

The most stunned face in the election-night coverage of the British election was that of Michael Portillo, who began the evening as minister of defense and high on the short list for Conservative party leader and before dawn had become the second-place finisher in his seat of Enfield Southgate. I was less surprised. I had been out in Enfield Southgate, in the northern suburban reaches of London, three days before the election, interviewing voters on the high street, called Green Lanes. My sample of 30 voters wasn't scientific, of course. But it wasn't Conservative either. In a district Portillo won by 58 to 26 percent in 1992, I found only six Conservative voters, versus 13 for Labour and five for the Liberal Democrats.

What they said helps explain why support for the Conservatives collapsed. This has happened before, in 1906 and 1945, in all three cases after the Tories had governed for 18 of the preceding 20 years, after they had split publicly on an important issue (free trade in 1906, appeasement in the 1930s, Europe now), and after the opposition (Liberals in 1906, old Labour in 1945, Tony Blair's New Labour in 1997) had transformed itself from an unthinkable party into one that seemed capable of governing. It is the political marketplace at work: If the Conservatives ordinarily seem the natural ruling party, they can also grow stale after a long period in office and lose support even in their bedrock base.

As they did in Enfield Southgate. "I've had enough of the Tories. We need a change," said Rob McNicholas, a 29-year-old stone mason who voted Conservative in 1992 and 1987. "They make a quick buck and wash their hands. They made a mess of the beef crisis. Look what they've done to the National Health Service, ripping the daylights out of it. Labour seem more together than the Tories." Simon, a 33-year-old tennis coach, was switching to Labour this time "because Conservatives have been in too long. I just think the country needs change." Robert Ward, a 29-year-old who puts together corporate hospitality sporting events, was voting Labour because "we deserve change. I've only known Tory government. I'd like to see what Labour is like." As Philip Williams, a computer manager who voted Conservative in 1992, said, "I'm not impressed by the behavior of the parties. Tories need to be a lot more united."

These voters—the voters Margaret Thatcher gained in the 1980s and John Major lost in the 1990s—were switching not just out of ennui or curiosity. When a party has been in for 18 years, grievances accumulate. In Enfield Southgate and the four other

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now made clear to them. Of course, Blair may in the end prove unable to control the left wing of his party, now that he has won the election for them; he may succumb to the siren song of the proponents of a single European currency and doom Britain to periodic bouts of high unemployment; he may unwittingly adopt so many "little" programs to appease his Left that the British economy, made competitive by the Thatcher reforms, once again becomes ossified.

But he can never again move his country to where it was before Margaret Thatcher handbagged it into its present condition. Nationalization of the means of production and distribution, the accepted policy of the pre-Thatcher Labour party, is now a ludicrous phrase in a nation that not so long ago did just that; instead, the debate is over how much further to carry privatization. Tax-and-spend is no longer an acceptable political slogan or a viable economic policy; this, in a country in which expansion of the welfare state was until very recently the stated goal of its Labour party and of complicit "One Nation" Tories. A crackdown on crime, once favored only by what seemed to be slightly loony "flog-'em-and-hang-'em" blue-haired ladies who attend Tory party conferences, is now considered de rigueur by Labour and Tories alike. Taxation high enough to produce "howls of anguish" from the rich, proposed when Labour last ruled, has been replaced by an all-party realization of the devastating effects of marginal tax rates in excess of 40 percent. The desirability of work instead of welfare and the need to restore old values—"Victorian" to Lady Thatcher, "Christian" to Tony Blair—are now beyond dispute.

If American commentators want to call this the defeat of conservatism, that is their privilege. But they are wrong. Margaret Thatcher has dragged the center of gravity of British politics so far to the right as to make the Labour party of today virtually indistinguishable from the Tory party as it was when she inherited it. Tony Blair is indeed one of Thatcher's children. And I think he knows it. ♦

constituencies where I interviewed voters, I heard over and over complaints about the National Health Service—not surprising, since there is infinite demand for, and finite supply of, the services the NHS provides. And the public fractiousness of the Tories—the result of assuming after their 1992 surprise victory that they could never lose—was unsettling to many.

The still faithful Conservative voters sounded dispirited. "I don't fancy Labour. They've done enough damage years ago," said 75-year-old Mrs. Williams. A 20-year-old worker in a soup factory favored John Major. "You know what you get. He's not perfect, but not as much trouble." "Yes, I suppose I will vote Conservative. I'm not very happy," said Mrs. Adams. Some Tory voters had just given up. "I don't think I'll be voting this time," said Mrs. Harvey, always a Tory in the past. "I'm unhappy now, I should be unhappy with Labour. The way things are now—the hospitals, the waiting lists." All over the country, Conservative turnout was way down: In Enfield Southgate, it dropped to 19,000, from 28,000 in 1992.

Nor did Michael Portillo, though hailed as a possible future prime minister, have much special appeal. His district is only half an hour's drive from Westminster, but none of these voters had seen much of him; one 20-year-old Conservative loyalist said, "I don't know him. I saw him once, in his car, with the window up." A Labour voter said that when he complained about having to pay £300 tax on his public housing, "Portillo told me I can't get my money back." And one Tory voter called him "slimy. He's so smooth he could slide uphill." The swing against Conservatives was biggest in greater London, where voters evidently have little contact with their MPs—or at least with those who see themselves as national leaders. In most seats the tide was so high it would have swept anyone away. But Portillo lost by only 1,400 votes. If he'd worked the district harder, perhaps he would have won.

The local Conservative party office was nearly empty when I called, and Robert Goss, treasurer of the local Conservative organization, whom I saw on Green Lanes, said, "We're not doing anything in this district. It's better to help the neighboring seat of Edmonton." But Edmonton, which Conservatives carried by only 600 votes in 1992, was a dead-certain loss. I don't know Michael Portillo, but the fact that he was so out of touch with opinion in his own district suggests it's no tragedy for the Conservatives that he won't be their leader any time soon. As Goss said before the election, "If we lost this seat, something dreadful would be happening." Something dreadful *was* happening to the Conservatives, but they didn't seem to have a clue.

Michael Barone, senior staff editor at **Reader's Digest**, *has been interviewing voters here and abroad for 35 years.*

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The Eminent Post-Victorian

A New Life of Virginia Woolf

By Malcolm Bradbury

"No, not Bloomsbury," thinks Jim Dixon when he wonders where in London to settle, as he escapes from his academic prison in the provinces near the end of Kingsley Amis's 1954 novel *Lucky Jim*. In the 1950s, as Amis's jibe indicated, it seemed as though it was time to call a moratorium on the whole Bloomsbury business. Bloomsbury was and is the postal district around the British Museum and the University of London that specialized in education, publishing, medicine, science, specialist bookstores, student hostels, bohemian pubs, art, and ideas. But it was more than that. It was the name and address of the most powerful, coherent, long-lived artistic intelligentsia Britain has produced during the 20th century.

By the time Amis wrote those words, Bloomsbury and its circle had been at the center of things for two generations; surely its day was past. It wasn't, not in 1954, and not today. Bloomsbury still fascinates, still seems to command. Studies of its texts and art-objects, biographies and bio-pics of its heroes and heroines, pastiches of its style, imitations of its chic are everywhere. Laura Ashley textiles echo its designs; gaunt-faced Virginia Woolfs appear on coffee mugs and T-shirts on several continents. Bloomsbury somehow found a face to meet the face of every post-modern decade, with its aestheticism, its feminism, its tribalism, its political liberalism, its economic radicalism, its liberationist ethics, its psychological consciousness, its Post-Impressionist exhibitions, its complex artistic and sexual networking, its self-confessed concourse of sodomites and sapphists, its alert response to fresh politics and new avant-garde adventures.

Hermione Lee
Virginia Woolf
Knopf, 912 pp., $39.95

It was bohemia, but very indoor and intimate—a highly elite group of mostly upper-middle-class friends, lovers, enemies, relatives, and hangers-on, who met one another often, ran many of the most interesting presses, magazines, galleries, and bookshops, retired together to the country, colonized a significant piece of the city, seemed strange, unusual, different, and often absurd, yet deeply influenced general taste.

The heyday of Bloomsbury ran from about 1904, when the children of the just-dead Sir Leslie Stephen departed Kensington to settle in its Georgian squares, to about 1941, the year in which the most influential of those children, Virginia Woolf, killed herself. Over that period it shifted from a kind of bitter Oedipal revolt against the remnants of late Victorian culture, against power, pomposity, piety, and patriarchy, into the chief expostulator of the spirit of the new, whatever the "new" was.

Bloomsbury was advanced, enlightened, open. It was generally left-leaning and radical, the source of Keynesianism, Anglo-liberalism, sexual and political revolution. Yet it was highly class-conscious, and its inclinations toward socialism never kept it from admiring aristocracy—in society, arts, intellect. Bloomsbury dispensed taste—new taste (of course), but it could frown as imperiously as Queen Victoria herself when its taste was offended. It was never commonplace or ordinary. It looked down on literature, however avant-garde, that was touched with the vulgar taint. Virginia Woolf learned much from Joyce's *Ulysses*, knew it was important, drew heavily on it for the structure of *Mrs. Dalloway*; but still she pronounced it "underbred."

Now as the century ends, Bloomsbury is coming to resemble the Victorian intelligentsia—those "moral authorities"—against which it was so passionately and formidably in revolt. For at its center, it was a dynastic elite, born from and extending the task of the Victorian reforming intelligentsia, out of which a good many of its most active participants (Stephenses, Woolfs, Stracheys, Russells) were descended.

Like the great Victorians, the men were mostly donnishly inclined, and very concerned with the aesthetic state of their souls; the women were mostly determined, demanding, sexually active bluestockings.

All possessed a high, confident sense of cultural and political author-

*Malcolm Bradbury is a novelist (*Rates of Exchange, Doctor Criminale*), a critic (*Dangerous Pilgrimages*), and a screenwriter (*Cold Comfort Farm*), now working on a screenplay of Virginia Woolf's* Flush.

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ity, and much of their best writing was on the subject of their Victorian forebears, those "Eminent Victorians" Lytton Strachey mocked with such decisive results in his 1918 book of that title. In *Eminent Victorians*, the world was introduced to the subversive modern art of defacing the statue, deconstructing the monument, upturning the solemn public identity.

It was a canon of Bloomsbury that the age of venerative biography was over—a pure act of Oedipal rebellion, since the father of them all, Sir Leslie Stephen, was Mr. Biography himself, the mastermind behind the biggest biographical project of his age, the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Stephen set its goal in 1882: "A biography written with a single eye giving all the information presumably desirable by an intelligent reader may be not only useful, but intensely interesting, and even a model of literary art."

Stephen's daughter Virginia rejected what she called the "wax mausoleum" style of biography, but unlike Strachey, who set out to debunk, she used the form to reveal the inner kernels of a life, presented without either venerative or debunking interference. One of her most vivid and interesting books—though finally she didn't greatly like it herself—is *Flush*, which examines the most romantic literary tale of the early Victorian period, the elopement of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning from Wimpole Street to Italy, through the eyes of a striking and in fact well-recorded participant: Flush, Elizabeth Barrett's cocker spaniel.

Woolf and Strachey may have rejected traditional biography, but they have become subjects of biographical veneration nonetheless. Michael Holroyd's *Lytton Strachey* took on the great anti-biographer and made his life in two volumes so personable he became the real subject of the film entitled *Carrington*.

There have, of course, been many, many accounts of Virginia Woolf as well, notably by Quentin Bell and Lyndall Gordon. One of the most recent and thorough is James King's 1994 *Virginia Woolf*. King's book gives a vivid portrait of a clever, fragile, self-destructive, often sexually provocative woman, much preoccupied with identity and death. Woolf

Kent Lemon

Virginia Woolf

emerges not only as a sensitive, delicate artist, but as a humorless, spiky, malicious, even malign figure.

It might thus seem there's little case for yet another attempt at a life of Virginia Woolf. So it had better be said at once that Hermione Lee's new life is brilliant, and justifies itself from the very start. Lee reminds us of the ambiguities that Woolf, the daughter of Mr. Biography, observed in the enterprise. "The biographer cannot extract the atom," Woolf said. "He gives us the husk. . . . Let the biographer print fully, completely, accurately, the known facts without comment; then let him write the life as fiction." Lee doesn't write the life as fiction (as Woolf did in *Orlando* and *Flush*), but as an elegant meditation, composed with both massive intelligence and an engaging humility. Lee has it just about right when she calls her subject "an autobiographer who never published an autobiography, . . . an egotist who loathed egotism."

Woolf was one of the best autobiographers of the creative act. Some of her observations in her diaries and notebooks on the process of writing, of imagining, conceiving, and composing, are among the most illuminating modern explorations of creativity. And there is a large autobiographical aspect to every one of her novels and essays; her strong preoccupation with self is one of the qualities modern critics like to label "feminist," but it isn't; if anything, it shares a great deal with the creative tone of the Romantics, most of whom were male.

An eminent British academic, Lee knows very well that modern literary theory, with its deconstructionist notions of the Death of the Author, has made the act of writing biography itself problematic. Yet one of the most gratifying aspects of her *Virginia Woolf* is that it is not overtly theoretical. Instead, Lee has found a highly readable form of open narrative meditation. It unfolds as a continuous series of essays, portrait speculations, based on voluminous research.

The chapters have headings like "Biography," "Houses," "Party-Going," "Madness," "Fascism," "War." They follow the whole run of Woolf's life, taking us into her writing, her language, her sensitivity, her creativity, her breakdowns, and her distinctive self-consciousness, as well as into her family life as daughter and sister, her marriage, her friendships and enmities, and her role in the greater Bloomsbury. All of this is presented with the sort of alert sensitivity Woolf brought to her own essays,

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fiction, and literary portraiture.

What her book reveals most of all is that Woolf, the great enemy of Victorianism, might actually be accounted the last of the Victorians. Woolf sought to create a distinctively female literary identity that could rival or outshine her father's; Woolf, the daughter of a man of letters, was a woman of letters. But the "woman of letters" was not a 20th-century creation; as a profession, the "woman of letters" first made her presence known in the Victorian intelligentsia. There was a plentiful quota of female scribblers working in proximity to scribbling men—sometimes they hid behind male names, and sometimes their education was spotty, but they were there, and they were formidable.

As Lee shows us, Woolf's novels, essays, and diaries all constantly hark back to childhood, its houses, and its places, to the old and familiar orders and structures of bourgeois family life. In Woolf's writing, the supposedly comfortable precincts of high bourgeois domesticity are always under threat from within by the tensions between husbands and wives, fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters, men and women.

History and politics were transforming the bourgeois world from the outside just as modern consciousness (like Woolf's) was challenging it from the inside. There were the sudden shocks of modernization brought about by the social and technological transformations of the turn into the 20th century, then the terrible European crisis of the Great War, which destroyed the Victorian universe forever. By the time Woolf began composing her novels, nearly all of which came after the War, the Victorian family lay shattered.

In exploring her own relationship to these changes, Woolf inclined more and more to see herself, by virtue of being female, as the essential outsider. History and war could be regarded as the things of men; women's writing needed a different history.

Even as Woolf and Bloomsbury broke away (how they broke away) from the Victorian ethos, they also sustained a curiously deep and intimate relationship with the intellectual and artistic energies of Victorian Britain. Bloomsbury was cosmopolitan to a degree, and rule-breaking, modern, but it was a kind of Victorian family itself. As Lee puts it, "While as a group it was instrumental in changing the nature of English life, it also stayed thickly knit and grown together like the family trees it had come from." These continuities, Lee stresses, now seem very powerful—and perhaps lead us where Bloomsbury would never have suspected they would lead, to a greater appreciation of the richness of Victo-

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rian literature and sensibility.

Lee carries Woolf's story through, stage by stage: from early uncertainties to fame, from sexual abuse and anxiety to a strong marriage to Leonard, from gender uncertainty to a greater commitment to female equality, from solitude to society and back again, from Bloomsbury as new guard to Bloomsbury as old guard, host to the "Auden generation" of the Thirties. She shows how the major novels—*Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, *The Years*—came to be written, never far from the personal events of Woolf's creatively vigorous yet personally fragile life. She shows too how much more writing there is still to be mined. By the end, Virginia Woolf was conscious of a great disintegration. She was writing mostly about death—so many deaths now surrounded her—and the past. In September 1939, war came again: "the worst of all my life's experiences." The bombs fell on Bloomsbury, destroying two of the circle's houses, erasing much of the London that had made her. She wrote furiously, felt she had "lost all power over words," and so produced largely fragments. She felt madness returning, and in March 1941 she walked into the River Ouse near Rodmell and "allowed herself to be drowned."

A latter-day woman of letters herself, Lee presents her own character anxiously, tentatively coming face to face (biographer, tourist, intruder) with a great, troubled woman of letters, hoping to sense what she sensed, to see something of what she saw. I believe she has. This is quite the best and most interesting book I know on the writerly and much-written-about subject of Virginia Woolf. ♦

The End of His Rainbow

Thomas Pynchon Fails to Deliver

By J. Bottum

There's Thomas Pynchon the literary event and then there's Thomas Pynchon the writer of novels. The literary event seems stronger than ever, with each new shot at privacy by the reclusive author of *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) engendering frenzied publicity—peaking now with the publication of his fifth novel, *Mason & Dixon*, just as it did in 1990 with his fourth, *Vineland*. But as far as Thomas Pynchon the novelist goes, we seem to have come at last to the end of him.

Thomas Pynchon
Mason & Dixon
Henry Holt & Co., 773 pp., $27.50

The unreadable hodgepodge that is *Mason & Dixon*—nearly 800 pages of the absurdist adventures of the surveyors of the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland, written in a deliberately annoying mockery of 18th-century prose and narrated by a clergyman with the typically Pynchonesque name of Cherrycoke—confirms what his oddly casual *Vineland* had suggested: With his self-indulgence and lack of literary discipline, Thomas Pynchon has wrecked himself. Now 60, with only two novels in the last 24 years, he will never deliver on his promise.

In the midst of all the hoopla about the man—rumors that he was cooking hamburgers in the pipeline camps of Alaska, or barricaded with guns and whiskey in an Appalachian stronghold, whereas he is actually living a fairly straightforward middle-class life in that last redoubt of anonymity, Manhattan—it's hard to remember nowadays just what Pynchon's literary promise was when *Gravity's Rainbow* appeared in 1973.

The fiction judges for the Pulitzer prize who picked it as the year's best novel found themselves promptly overruled by their editorial board, who declared the book unreadable and obscene. Both these judgments were correct. *Gravity's Rainbow* is in many ways unreadable and obscene. In an essay on the languors that occasionally come in a life of reading, Joseph Epstein reports the sigh that must inevitably escape a reader who encounters a prostitute defecating into the mouth of Brigadier Pudding and realizes that there are still 400 pages left to go in the mammoth book. But *Gravity's Rainbow* was also the best novel of 1973: the best novel of the decade, the only book since Vladimir Nabokov wrote *Lolita*, *Pnin*, and *Ada* in the '50s and '60s to suggest that the huge, modernist project was not yet quite dead and that a master could still seek for language, history, and human nature a single explanation. (While an undergraduate science major at Columbia, Pynchon attended Nabokov's class on fiction-writing; it is perhaps typical of both the camouflaged younger author and his prickly elder that Nabokov claimed not to remember him.)

Of course, Pynchon is a postmodern writer as well, his work famous for its endless portrayals of paranoia. But while his contemporaries were busy writing novels that declared the postmodern impossibility of ever explaining anything, he was still on the hunt for an old-fashioned kind of unity. And if a juvenile paranoia is the only nexus of language, history, and human nature that remains in a postmodern world, it is still some

Contributing editor J. Bottum last wrote for The Weekly Standard *about Jonathan Rosen's* Eve's Apple.

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sort of explanation, and Pynchon's genius was to carry it to its logical extreme. After *V.*, which told the story of a hopeless quest for a mysterious unnamed woman, he produced *The Crying of Lot 49*, his shortest and most accessible work, a classic tale of conspiracy, California, and the centuries-long survival of the Holy Roman Empire's Thurn und Taxis postal monopoly.

The author was always capable of mocking his own fascinations ("Watch the paranoia, please" a mysterious voice suddenly whispers in the ear of a character in *Vineland*), but he never let a postmodernesque self-reference become dominant in his work.

And with *Gravity's Rainbow*, he brought his fascinations all together in his most potent symbol. The German V-2 rockets, tracing their rainbow arc to London in World War II, traveled faster than sound, with the first result that by the time you heard them you had already lived through them, and the custom-made paranoid second result that whenever you *didn't* hear them, they were falling on you. "A screaming comes across the sky," the book began.

Pynchon's is a teenager's explanation of the world, but with the humor of his characters' mock names ("Oedipa Maas" in *The Crying of Lot 49*, "Tyrone Slothrop" in *Gravity's Rainbow*) and his skill with wordplay, science, and the disassociated sort of logic that invariably produces conspiracy theories, Pynchon seemed the James Joyce of the adolescent mind, the Jorge Luis Borges of pubescence. And as the years passed after *Gravity's Rainbow*, with rumors of his long-meditated masterwork in progress, it seemed possible that he would turn to the adult artist's project of seeking a livable explanation of the world and produce at last the restoration of the magisterial novel.

After the insignificance of *Vineland*, *Mason & Dixon* stands as an undeniably major work. It is brilliant in spots, and funny sometimes, and occasionally the prose hits a rhythmic canter and runs along in the compulsive, maniacal pace that allowed one to keep reading *Gravity's Rainbow* despite its 900 pages and indigestible scatology. But mostly, the book is a one-horse joke, an annoying and in many ways predictable disquisition on the strangeness and ultimate immorality (when viewed with a postmodern eye) of the rationalist Enlightenment project of running an imaginary survey line across the wilderness.

The pseudo-18th-century prose and picaresque anti-structure—a technique previously employed by John Barth in *The Sot-Weed Factor*—quickly becomes unbearable. Though the novel vastly improves with the surveyors' arrival in America 250 pages into the book, it comes much too late to salve the irritation of anyone capable of distinguishing the literary event that is *Mason & Dixon* from *Mason & Dixon* itself.

Framed with the device of the Rev'd Cherrycoke visiting relatives in 1790s Philadelphia and telling the story of the real-life adventures of Charles Mason (1728-1786) and Jeremiah Dixon (1733-1779) in the envenomed years before the American Revolution, the novel begins with the surveyors' early efforts at erotic conquest and Enlightenment science. Later, upon arriving in America, they manage to meet not only Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, but a series of bizarre, invented characters: the French chef Armand Allegre (the haunted love-object of a sexually confused mechanical duck), Zepho Beck (an unfortunate were-beaver), and a host of others. Cherrycoke's sprawling narrative becomes a tale not just of dispossessed Indians, rebellious colonists, and uninformed British rulers, but also the paranoid account of a Sino-Jesuit conspiracy to rule the world.

Pynchon's repeated forays into anachronism are often funny—"Keep away from harmful Substances, in particular Coffee, Tobacco, and Indian Hemp," Mason and Dixon are warned; "If you must use the latter, do not inhale"—but they quickly pall, as though the reader were being nudged for the thousandth time to understand that everything in the book is an allegory for our own time. So too his innumerable echoes and parodies of the novels of Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and nearly every other classic American literary work (including his own novels) eventually become tiresome, both the humor and the serious meaning lost in the numbing repetition.

With the Mason-Dixon Line, Pynchon found what is perhaps the richest possible metaphor for showing the direct origin of all of later America in the initial events of colonization. Intellectual history becomes one with political and social history, marking out a line across the forests and signaling the Enlightenment break of reason from nature. But as the novel drags on and on—and on and on—the author finds no solution and lets himself fall back into the postmodern humor of reference and the vein of paranoia he already exhausted with *Gravity's Rainbow.*

The early reviewers of *Mason & Dixon* universally proclaimed it an instant classic, a great American novel. But reading their proclamations, buried as the second or third review in their journals, one has the sense that they were mostly responding to its author's literary prominence and didn't really mean it. Able to force himself over seven years to write 800 clever, complicated pages of archaic prose glorifying a pair of surveyors, Thomas Pynchon obviously has considerable discipline, in a certain sense of the word. But he lacks the discipline to force himself to fulfill his promise and find an answer to the intellectual and artistic problem that he alone of his generation could have used the novel to solve. Set in his ways, he now never will. ♦

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A Brilliant Novel of Cuba

The 'Paradise of Nada,' As Seen from Exile

By Mark Falcoff

Leftists, social democrats, and innocents of various sizes and shapes are fond of telling us that, say what you will about Fidel Castro's revolution, Cuba is the one Latin American country that has completely eliminated illiteracy. Rather less often do they remark upon the fact that all those literate Cubans don't have much to read, unless your idea of light fare is an operating manual for a tractor or the collected works of Lenin. No Communist country, with the possible exception of Albania, has ever done such an efficient job of exiling the totality of its literary class.

Zoé Valdés
Yocandra in the Paradise of Nada
A Novel of Cuba
Arcade, 192 pp., $21.95

Just consider: Today no major Cuban writer—not a single one, not a one—is at work on the island. Guillermo Cabrera Infante lives in Great Britain, while Norberto Fuentes, Heberto Padilla, Antonio Benítez Rojo, Eugenio Florit, José Triana, and Jesús Díaz are in the United States. As a result, their work is unavailable to the majority of their compatriots. The relationship between Cuban writers and the Cuban state is one of synergism in reverse: Cuban literature today is quintessentially a literature of exile, the product of a revolution whose only enduring legacies have been physical hunger and emotional nostalgia.

The latest example is an astounding new first novel by Zoé Valdés, a young Cuban woman who lives and writes in Paris. *Yocandra in the Paradise of Nada* is a series of vignettes spanning the period from the narrator's birth in 1959, the year of Castro's accession to power, to the present. The bulk of the story takes place now, in the "Special Period in Time of Peace," the Castro regime's euphemism for Cuban history since the collapse of the Soviet empire and the end of Moscow's $6 billion annual subsidy. Life for the title character, Yocandra, as indeed for most Cubans, has become unimaginably hard, and the best talents on the island are wholly absorbed in negotiating past new scarcities.

The literary magazine where Yocandra works can't even be printed, because there's no paper. But it isn't just paper that Cuba lacks; it's food, toothpaste, toilet paper, electrical power, fresh water . . . you name it. "In Cuba," the narrator declaims, "there is no dignity—how can you have dignity without deodorant?" How indeed.

Luckily for her, Yocandra is something of a nymphomaniac. I say "luckily," because sex is just about the only thing left in Cuba that is not unobtainable or subject to government rationing. This provides Valdés with an excuse to fill endless pages with graphic descriptions of Yocandra in bed with various lovers, which—far more than its obvious literary merit—may explain this book's huge commercial success in Spain, France, and Germany.

Instead of fantasizing about sex, Yocandra gorges on it. Her idea of pornography, however, is to watch American television programs at the home of a friend who's figured out how to circumvent the government's efforts to scramble incoming signals. True, she says, the fare is pretty bad, but she derives near-orgasmic pleasure from the advertisements for food items, deodorants, and shampoos. In a letter to a friend in Spain, Yocandra asks pathetically what gazpacho tastes like. ("I saw it being made in Almodóvar's film, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.") Even her mother, for so long a pillar of the Federation of Cuban Women, has slipped back into senile recollection of the delicious entrées she used to prepare before Castro came to power.

As a child born and educated in the Cuban revolution, Yocandra has grown up to be its perfect antithesis. Far from being a devoted militant of the cause, the model of Castro's New Socialist Man (or Woman), she has become wholly self-absorbed. As one of her friends remarks, "Life is more than boot camp." Nor is Yocandra impressed with the revolution's "achievements."

"I know there's wretchedness throughout Latin America," she concedes, "but other countries didn't experience revolution, didn't have to listen to the bullshit about 'building a better world.'" Why not admit, she adds, that the whole thing has been a gigantic fraud?

Is this a "political" book? American author Oscar Hijuelos, whose generous endorsement is printed on the back cover, tries to reassure liberals, the sort of people who might feel uncomfortable with "Cuban exile literature," that *Yocandra in the Paradise of Nada* has "no pro-Castro or anti-Castro agenda . . . only the agenda of self."

In fact, however, it is difficult to see how "the agenda of self" can be unrelated to such a dichotomy. This is, after all, not merely a book about poverty and scarcity, but about poverty and scarcity *of a very particular kind*, the consequences of deliber-

Mark Falcoff is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

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ate political choices. Yocandra/Zoé Valdés takes angry issue with people who think that "people throw themselves into the sea over insignificant economic deprivations—can't get any blue jeans, can't find any chewing gum." Such people "simply don't know Cuba, don't know the hunger and terror that the Cuban people have known." To have provided such eloquent testimony in fewer than two hundred pages, and to spice it with sex and humor, is a sign of immense literary vitality. *Yocandra in the Paradise of Nada* provides convincing evidence that, even continents away from its source, Cuban literature is alive and well. ♦

A Raw Deal for FDR

Washington's Latest, Unmonumental Memorial

By Pia Catton

After a half-century of planning, the memorial to Franklin Delano Roosevelt opened last week in Washington. Whether or not FDR deserves a monument that cost as much as the New Deal is debatable. But we can be certain that no president, FDR included, deserves a memorial that mocks his legacy. The Tidal Basin, where we honor our greatest national heroes, now includes a bleak and inappropriate tribute to the 32nd president—one that contradicts his personality, belittles his contribution to history, and ignores his own wishes.

Landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, who won the commission for the project, chose to memorialize FDR with an outdoor museum. This untraditional format consists of four "rooms," one for each presidential term. The rooms include bronze work and waterfalls representing the major events in that term. Halprin's purpose was not so much to memorialize Roosevelt as to make the memorial a fun public space. "The design of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorial brings together [Halprin's] desire to make environments through his art," his official biography reads, "emphasizing the beauty of the urban landscape and the participation and enjoyment of those who experience it."

The memorial is as accessible and gentle as your grandmother's garden. The statue of FDR himself is larger than life size, but not very imposing; all the other statuary is at human scale. The waterfalls give off low roars but end in shallow, still pools. Inscriptions on the granite stones relay FDR's memorable quotes, and require no neck-craning or eye-squinting. In the words of former senator Mark Hatfield, co-chairman of the FDR Memorial Commission, "We sought . . . for this memorial to embrace, not stand apart from, its visitors." Hatfield and committee got what they wanted. It is nearly impossible to feel intimidated or overwhelmed here.

Forget lofty thoughts of heroism; all rumination here is anchored on a totally human plane. As a result, visitors are irreverent. Children play and climb on the granite rocks inscribed with FDR's words, "I hate war." At the bronze sculpture of four men in a Depression-era bread line, visitors stand in the line as well and have their picture taken, Disney-style. Joggers tramp and pant directly through, not just around, the site.

Yet there is little good cheer here. The outdoor gallery records the depressing aspects of FDR's presidency without so much as a hint of his cheerful personality or his optimism. The large sculpture of FDR features a grim, sober look rather than his exuberant smile. And the 6,000 tons of reddish granite recall nothing short of a giant gravestone.

The room representing Roosevelt's fourth term symbolizes war. Water tumbles over blocks of granite resembling postwar rubble and chaos. The quotes from FDR reflect the sorrow of war, rather than the pride of victory. Roosevelt comes off as a brooding pacifist, instead of the formidable military leader he eventually became.

In this way, as in others, the monument misrepresents and diminishes the man. Roosevelt's memorial is located almost equidistant from the monuments to Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, and the Washington monument is visible wherever you stand. But you cannot see the FDR memorial from any point around the Tidal Basin because it is totally obscured by trees. The design literally puts FDR in the shadows of greatness.

FDR himself did not want an immense memorial. He did not even want a moderately sized memorial. He told Felix Frankfurter that if he was to receive a memorial after his death, he wanted a stone no bigger than his desk placed outside the National Archives. For many tasteful years, FDR's wishes were carried out. But little by little memorial fever set in. So much so that at the recent dedication, President Clinton, who wore FDR-style arm-braces for the day, was able to presume that "it is right that we go a little beyond his wishes." Why? Because FDR was the "greatest president of this great American century." Too bad they didn't erect a monument that said that. ♦

Pia Catton is a reporter for The Weekly Standard.

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The Boston Globe

Parody

Scandal-Free Kennedy Shunned by Clan

"I'm an embarrassment" admits decent, honorable kinsman

By Brian C. Mooney
GLOBE STAFF

When the Kennedy family gathers at its compound in Hyannis this summer for sun, fun, and respite from the high-powered world of politics and public life, one Kennedy will almost certainly be absent.

"I'll probably be at home watching a ballgame on TV, or maybe doing stuff in the yard," says Cecil Kennedy, 32, a third cousin of the late Joseph P. Kennedy and one of the few members of the family never embroiled in scandal. "They'd never invite me," he says, ruefully. "I'm sort of the white sheep of the family."

Cecil's name has never come up in connection with recklessness, sexual misconduct, substance abuse, or any other illicit activity, say observers close to the Kennedys. Many of them describe a growing sense of a legacy squandered. The family inner circle is said to be privately fuming about Cecil and has branded him "not a Kennedy."

"The word is, on top of everything, he has no ambition to expand the public sector," says a longtime Kennedy watcher, adding, "Personally, I doubt this kid could even cut it as a Shriver."

Cecil's relation to the New England dynasty is not disputed, though his mother's marriage into it was annulled a few years ago on technical grounds. (Under canon law, marriage vows are non-binding "*ab initio*, if one of the parties happens to be a Kennedy.") The real source of his ostracism, Cecil readily admits, is his own inability to live up to expectations.

"I needed to prove I was worthy—an academic suspension, an unwanted sexual advance, something," he recalls. "But I kept disappointing everyone."

At Harvard College, ignoring tradition, he took his own mid-terms and finals, doing well on many. Once, before an oral presentation, he received a phone call from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) urging him to "ah ... try ... ah ... not ... to ... ah ... er ... be ... too ... umm ... articulate." Again, Cecil failed. He now suspects that his decision to take advanced life saving and CPR classes may have permanently alienated the senator.

Cecil also recalls how, after completing law school, he passed the bar exam on his first attempt. "I can still see their crestfallen faces," he says, wistfully. After that, he plummeted headlong into quiet respectability. He has been happily married for 10 years to his high-school sweetheart.

Sen. Kennedy would not discuss his strained relationship with Cecil, although, through a spokesman, he belched loudly. Rep. Joe Kennedy (D-Mass.) also had no comment, other than that an ambassadorship to Uruguay was still available for Cecil, if he would "just steer clear of the governor's race."

Meanwhile, Cecil knows he has no hope of an invitation to Hyannis any time soon. "I never wanted this to happen. I've always wanted to do things together, as a family," he says. "I even offered to babysit their kids." But all his offers have been rebuffed.

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